

**THE STATES OF DELIBERATION**  
**of the**  
**ISLAND OF GUERNSEY**

**STATES' ASSEMBLY & CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE**

**POLLING STATIONS AND POSTAL VOTING**

The States are asked to decide whether, after consideration of the policy letter entitled "Polling Stations and Postal Voting" dated 4<sup>th</sup> October 2024, they are of the opinion:

1. To agree that for the 2025 General Election:
  - i. All polling stations shall be "super-polling stations", open to any eligible voter.
  - ii. There shall be two days of advance polling, one weekend polling day on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June and one weekday polling day on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June.
  - iii. There shall be a total of eight polling stations, with three opening on all three polling days, and the remaining five opening on the day of the General Election only.
2. To agree that a voter wishing to vote by post in the 2025 General Election must apply for a postal vote on or before Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> May.
3. To direct the preparation of such legislation as may be necessary to give effect to the above decisions.

The above Propositions have been submitted to His Majesty's Procureur for advice on any legal or constitutional implications.

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**POLLING STATIONS AND POSTAL VOTING**

The Presiding Officer  
States of Guernsey  
Royal Court House  
St Peter Port

4<sup>th</sup> October 2024

Dear Sir

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The States' Assembly & Constitution Committee ("the Committee") is mandated to advise the States and to develop and implement policies in relation to elections to the office of People's Deputy.
- 1.2 This is the Committee's fourth policy letter this political term in respect of the General Election to be held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2025, following the first debated in January 2024<sup>1</sup> which proposed various amendments to the Reform Law<sup>2</sup>; the second debated in May 2024<sup>3</sup> which, *inter alia*, proposed expenditure limits for candidates and political parties; and the third debated in September 2024<sup>4</sup>, which addressed Amendments to the first two policy letters which directed further work to be undertaken by the Committee in respect of expenditure limits and criminal conviction declarations.
- 1.3 The purpose of this policy letter is to request the States to direct the preparation of the necessary legislation in respect of two further aspects of the 2025 General Election; polling stations and postal voting.
- 1.4 Establishing the polling stations is the responsibility of the Registrar-General; however, in order to open polling stations prior to Election Day and to allow for polling stations to be open to any eligible voter regardless of which Parish they reside in, an Ordinance must be made. Advance polling and "super polling

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<sup>1</sup> [Billet d'État I \(January 2024\)](#) – P.2023/119

<sup>2</sup> [The Reform \(Guernsey\) Law, 1948](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Billet d'État VII \(May 2024\)](#) – P.2024/34

<sup>4</sup> [Billet d'État XIII \(September 2024\)](#) – P.2024/62

stations” were highly successful in the 2020 Election and the Committee proposes to offer both again for 2025. It also proposes to consolidate the polling stations, which was a recommendation made in the Registrar-General’s report of the 2020 Election that the Committee agreed to consider ahead of 2025, and these plans are outlined in this policy letter to inform the Assembly’s decision to make the necessary Ordinance.

- 1.5 A further recommendation which the Committee was directed by the States to consider ahead of 2025 was to move the deadline for postal vote applications further from polling day, as although postal voting was also highly successful, some problems were encountered, the most significant of which were challenges in the issuing and return of voting packs to and from overseas voters. Hence, for the reasons outlined in this policy letter, the Committee is recommending an earlier deadline to apply for a postal vote for the 2025 General Election.

## **2 Polling Stations**

### Background

- 2.1 Two reports were published following the 2020 Election, both of which made various recommendations for the improvement of future elections in Guernsey. One recommendation from the Registrar-General was to consider consolidating the polling stations and increasing the number of “super polling stations” (polling stations open to any eligible voter rather than only those in that Parish) and it was agreed by the Committee that it would consult with the Parishes and the Registrar-General ahead of the 2025 General Election to identify an appropriate number of polling stations.
- 2.2 Having now considered the analysis, experience and feedback of the 2020 Election, and consulted with the Douzaines and the Registrar-General, the Committee has formulated a plan for the provision of polling stations which is outlined in this policy letter.
- 2.3 Whilst the number and locations of polling stations are not decisions that need to be made by the Assembly, under Article 15A of the Reform Law, 1972<sup>5</sup> an Ordinance is required to provide for voting at a polling station before the date appointed for the holding of an election, i.e. for advance polling days; and to provide for a person to vote in an election at a polling stations outside the Parish in respect of which their name appears on the Electoral Roll, i.e. for any polling station to be a super-polling station. Hence the planned arrangements in respect of polling stations are outlined here to inform the Assembly’s decision to make the required Ordinance under Article 15A.

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<sup>5</sup> [The Reform \(Guernsey\) Law, 1972](#)

## Analysis of 2020 Election

- 2.4 The 2020 Election was the first under island-wide voting and featured several innovations, including pre-polling days, super-polling stations, and a significant uptake of postal voting, with 75% of votes cast via a postal ballot. These innovations were highly successful, offering convenience and flexibility to voters, and it is important to build on these successes to further optimise the voting process and voter experience in 2025.
- 2.5 Although the high uptake of postal voting can be attributed in part to the 2020 Election being held in the midst of the COVID pandemic, most restrictions had been lifted at the time of the Election, and it was the significant increase in the number of candidates to choose from and the number of votes available to cast under the new island-wide voting system that were cited by many as the reason to opt for a postal vote. Given the extent to which the electorate embraced postal voting in 2020, and knowing they will have up to 38 votes to cast and may have over 100 candidates to choose from again in 2025, it is anticipated that voting via a postal ballot will continue to be a popular option, allowing voters to consider their votes in their own time prior to polls opening.
- 2.6 As a result of the uptake of postal voting being far higher than anticipated – the Committee’s target was 30% – the number of voters visiting a polling station was significantly lower than anticipated, and hence the provision of polling stations overcompensated for the demand. Although a substantial number of voters (42%) still visited a polling station, with 25% completing their ballot at a polling station and 17% dropping off a postal ballot, the footfall figures showed that several polling stations could have operated for fewer days or not been opened at all, with neighbouring polling stations having the capacity to accommodate their voter numbers, and this was supported by feedback from the Parishes.
- 2.7 Consideration was also given ahead of the 2020 Election to allow voters to vote at any polling station, i.e. to make all polling stations “super-polling stations”, but it was ultimately agreed by the States, as recommended by the Committee at the time, that offering the voter a “hybrid system” was the most appropriate option for the first island-wide vote, owing to uncertainty around the logistics of running super-polling stations and how many voters would opt to use each one with no restrictions on where people could vote.
- 2.8 However, it was agreed by the Committee and acknowledged in its policy letter<sup>6</sup> that voters being able to vote at any polling station would be the ideal option under an island-wide system, as this would best demonstrate the single electoral district in operation. It was also acknowledged that it would present the opportunity to increase voter engagement in enabling the voter to vote at

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<sup>6</sup> [Billet d'État VII \(April 2019\)](#) – P.2019/22

whichever polling station is most convenient to them and would reduce the risk of attending the “wrong” polling station.

- 2.9 The logistical concerns raised with regard to running super polling-stations centred around the lack of an electronic system, updatable in real-time across multiple polling stations, to prevent any voter casting more than one vote. Whilst this is a valid concern, it should be noted that checks are carried out after the count where any such incidents would be identified, and as will be made clear in the communications to the public ahead of the Election, casting multiple votes is an offence under the law.
- 2.10 There is also the possibility that an electronic electoral roll will be available on a trial basis in selected polling stations for the 2025 General Election, as this is something that is currently being developed, although other changes to the electoral roll must take priority. Whilst not considered to be a necessity in order for all polling stations to be super-polling stations, this would assist in making sure any such instances were caught at the time rather than after the count.
- 2.11 With the number of innovations to the electoral system in 2020, voter behaviour and resource requirements were difficult to predict, and so the compromise of a hybrid system and the overprovision of polling stations was understandable. But now with the experience and analysis of the 2020 Election, there is sufficient evidence to support consolidating the polling stations and reconsidering making them all super-polling stations.

#### Proposals for 2025

- 2.12 Considering the smooth operation, popularity, positive feedback and cost-effectiveness of super-polling stations in 2020, this model has been proven to have minimal drawbacks, and as acknowledged ahead of the 2020 Election, would better reflect the single electoral district. Therefore, the Committee proposes to allow voters to vote at any polling station in 2025.
- 2.13 It is also proposed, having analysed the lower than anticipated footfall in 2020, and with postal voting expected to continue to be the preferred choice, to reduce the number of advance polling days from three to two – on the Sunday and Tuesday before the Election – and to reduce the number of polling stations to three large venues open on all three polling days across the island, and five additional polling stations open on Election Day only, as listed below.

Open on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June:

- Beau Sejour (Dave Ferguson Hall)
- Les Maingys Activity Centre
- Styx Community Centre

Open on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June only:

- Castel Douzaine Room
- St Martin's Parish Hall
- St Sampson's Community Hall
- St Peter Port Constables Office
- St Andrew's Douzaine Room

- 2.14 The provision of pre-polling stations helps to manage footfall by spreading it out over several days, as well as giving more opportunities to the electorate to cast their votes at times convenient to them.
- 2.15 Given their extensive experience in managing polling stations, and their continued support in delivering elections, the Douzaines were consulted on these proposals at several stages. First via the Parish Working Group (now Douzaine Liaison Group) in September and November 2023 where initial proposals were shared for discussion and feedback. Then in April 2024 more detailed proposals were shared, where the proposed consolidation of polling stations and venues to be used were outlined. Further feedback was sought to ensure the Parishes were on board with the proposed changes.
- 2.16 The feedback was widely supportive, and the concerns and recommendations which were received have been factored into the final proposals. This included opening an additional polling station at St Andrew's Douzaine Room (at the request of the Parish), opting for Les Maingys rather than the Douzaine Room in the Vale to accommodate anticipated footfall, and amending proposals to open the five smaller venues for one day rather than three.
- 2.17 It is acknowledged that this is a considerable reduction in the number of polling stations compared to 2020. However, the plans are supported by the analysis and forecasts carried out, as well as contingency measures of assuming 25% more voters will attend a polling station than in 2020 and providing additional polling booths to cope with greater footfall at peak times. Hence the Committee considers this level of consolidation to be appropriate and manageable.
- 2.18 It will be ensured that each polling station is adequately staffed and equipped to handle anticipated voter turnout. Each proposed location has been assessed for its suitability, availability, and capacity to handle the expected number of voters, to help ensure a seamless voting experience.
- 2.19 As part of this assessment, visits were carried out with the States' Disability Officer to evaluate the accessibility of each venue. It was established that all polling stations, apart from St Andrews Douzaine Room, had fully accessible entrances, exits and toilet facilities. Similarly, most had on-site parking with designated blue badge spaces or spaces which could be allocated to blue badge

holders on polling days. In the case of St Andrews there is limited parking but additional parking nearby at the church, whilst St Peter Port Constables Office has considerable nearby parking in the town area.

- 2.20 Requirements for any additional signage was identified to help guide voters to and through the polling stations, as well as to accessible entrances, exits and facilities. It was also ensured that there was space for additional seating, which was something reflected in the feedback from the recent questionnaire on accessibility of the 2020 Election.
- 2.21 Consideration was also given to venues which were echoey and may be loud on polling days. The provision of sound baffling booths at designated polling stations is being explored for voters who may struggle with the noise, and this information will be shared with voters in readiness for the General Election.
- 2.22 The information gathered will be added to the AccessAble website and the States' Election website in due course. This will include details of parking and bus routes to help all those who wish to attend a polling station to do so, thus making polling stations accessible to all.

#### Recommendations

- 2.23 The States are asked to approve the drafting of the necessary Ordinance to prescribe the following for the 2025 General Election:
  - All polling stations are “super-polling stations” open to any eligible voter.
  - To have two days of advance polling, one weekend polling day on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June and one weekday polling day on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June.
  - To have a total of eight polling stations, with three opening on all three polling days, and the remaining five opening on Election Day only, with the locations to be listed in the Schedule of the Ordinance.

### **3 Postal Voting**

- 3.1 Article 15A (1) of the Reform (Amendment) (Guernsey) Law, 1972 enables the States to make provisions by Ordinance as it sees fit in relation to postal voting and other means of voting, whether or not involving attendance at a polling station, at elections for the office of People's Deputy.
- 3.2 As covered to in Section 2 of this policy letter, the 2020 Election saw a large increase in the number of voters opting for a postal vote, with a total of 21,171 postal ballots issued. This was an increase of 18,365 applications from the 2016 Election whereby just 9% of voters selected this option. There are no restrictions on who can opt for a postal vote. Given the high number of postal votes issued in the 2020 Election, it is expected there will be a continued demand for postal

votes at the 2025 General Election.

- 3.3 The manual issuing of postal votes is labour intensive, and subject to strict procedures as laid down in the Law. In order to facilitate the larger number of voters who use this option, the services of the previous postal vote provider have been re-engaged for the 2025 General Election.
- 3.4 At present, the Law states that an individual who wishes to vote by post shall submit an application not less than five days before the date appointed for the holding of the election. The States have agreed that the General Election of People's Deputies will be held on Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2025, and therefore the deadline for applications under the current provisions would be Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> June.
- 3.5 For the 2020 Election it was prescribed by Ordinance<sup>7</sup> that an application for a postal vote should be made not less than five clear days before the first date when votes may be cast at a polling station, i.e. the first day of advance polling, rather than the date appointed for the holding of the Election.
- 3.6 However, the Registrar-General has requested that the deadline for applications for postal votes be amended to be further from the first day of polling for 2025.
- 3.7 It is reported that the timeframe has consistently proved problematic and challenging for previous Election Teams – even when dealing with a fraction of the applications expected for this Election – to process applications in time to ensure voters receive their postal packs in time to vote, running the risk of disenfranchising voters.
- 3.8 The Registrar-General has to finalise the Electoral Roll (showing the names of those who have applied for postal votes with a line through their name) in advance of polling opening. There will still be a requirement for printed copies of the Electoral Roll for each polling station, and adequate collation and printing time needs to be allowed. Time also needs to be allowed to ensure any last-minute postal vote applications are processed, issued and have adequate time to be returned by 18<sup>th</sup> June.
- 3.9 In light of these factors and working on the basis that the first day of advance polling will be Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June as is proposed in Proposition 1 (ii), the Registrar General has recommended on this occasion that the application for postal votes is closed at 23:59 on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May to enable the timely processing of these applications and the printing of the Electoral Roll. Accordingly, appropriate legislative provision will need to be made.

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<sup>7</sup> [Postal Voting \(Amendment\) Ordinance, 2020](#)



#### **4 Compliance with Rule 4**

4.1 Rule 4 of the Rules of Procedure of the States of Deliberation and their Committees sets out the information which must be included in, or appended to, motions laid before the States.

4.2 In accordance with Rule 4(1):

- a) The propositions contribute to the States' objectives and policy plans as set out in the Government Work Plan, which identified the 2025 General Election as an essential, priority workstream for this political term.
- b) In preparing the propositions, consultation has been undertaken with the Registrar-General of Electors and the Douzaines.
- c) The propositions have been submitted to His Majesty's Procureur for advice on any legal or constitutional implications.
- d) The financial implications to the States of carrying the proposals into effect are the recurring costs associated with elections which have been accounted for in the States' Annual Budget Report.

4.3 In accordance with Rule 4(2):

- a) The propositions relate to the duties of the Committee "to advise the States and to develop and implement policies in relation to elections to the office of People's Deputy".
- b) The propositions have the unanimous support of the Committee.

Yours faithfully

C.P. Meerveld  
President

G.A. St Pier  
Vice President

S.P. Fairclough  
Y. Burford  
L.J. McKenna