



OFFICIAL REPORT

OF THE

STATES OF GUERNSEY

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT

COMMITTEE

Review of Island Wide Voting
Public Hearing

HANSARD

Guernsey, Wednesday, 4th October 2023

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*Further information relating to the Scrutiny Management Committee
can be found on the official States of Guernsey website at www.gov.gg/scrutiny*

Members Present:

Panel Chair: Deputy Yvonne Burford – President

Ms Michelle Le Clerc – Non-States’ Member
Advocate Chris Green – Non-States’ Member

Mr Mark Huntington – Principal Scrutiny Officer

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Scrutiny Management Committee

Island Wide Voting Public Hearing

*The Committee met at 2 p.m.
in Castel Douzaine Room*

[DEPUTY BURFORD *in the Chair*]

Procedural – Remit of the Committee

The Chair (Deputy Burford): Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to this Scrutiny Management Committee public hearing, the outcome of which will feed into the Committee's review on Island-wide voting. I am Yvonne Burford and with me on the Panel are Advocate Chris Green and Ms Michelle Le Clerc, and also the Scrutiny Principal Officer, Mr Mark Huntington.

5 There are two one-hour sessions this afternoon on two different subjects, commencing with the mechanics of elections and electoral systems. The Scrutiny Management Committee's Review Panel commissioned a survey recently, which attracted over 1,400 responses. In some of the questions today, we will be referring to data that emerged from that survey.

10 In addition, several of our witnesses today submitted written representations to our call for evidence and where that is the case, we may ask them individual questions based on those submissions. If I can respectfully ask the witnesses to endeavour to be as concise as they can in their answers, so that we can cover as much ground as possible in the time available. And please be advised that the hearing will be livestreamed and in due course a *Hansard* transcript of the hearing will be published on the Scrutiny website.

15 So if everyone could please ensure their phones are set to silent, I will now ask the witnesses to give a brief introduction of themselves, starting with Mr Doherty, please.

EVIDENCE OF Prof. Kevin Bales, St Saviours Douzenier; Mr Matt Fallaize, former Deputy and President of SACC; Mr Alistair Doherty, former Westminster House of Commons Clerk

20 **Mr Doherty:** My name is Alastair Doherty. I am a former House of Commons Clerk and I have also worked on democracy building and parliamentary strengthening around the world, including Guernsey – not that it needs much strengthening, but I have had a connection with the Committee for a while.

Mr Fallaize: Good afternoon. Matt Fallaize; I was a Deputy for 12 years, which included a spell as President of the States' Assembly & Constitution Committee during the time when proposals were being developed for a referendum on the electoral system.

25 **Prof. Bales:** My name is Kevin Bales. I am a professor at the University of Nottingham and my
work is in human rights. In the past I worked a good deal with different types of political
organisations doing opinion polling, and sometimes campaign building. I brought along a picture
of the very first democratic ballot ever put in South Africa, because one of my clients was the
African National Congress. I brought it along because all the pain and suffering that went in for
30 decades to reach a moment of democracy, which is encapsulated in a ballot, I just thought it is
worth remembering that it takes a lot of work and a lot of time and a lot of heart to get to that
point.

The Chair: Thank you.

35 Okay, we will move straight into the questions then. Anyone feel free to answer these unless
we specifically direct them at a particular person.

So the first question we have is what challenges do you believe particularly impact on electoral
systems in small jurisdictions?

40 **Prof. Bales:** Well, he is the expert, but –

Mr Doherty: Well, no, I am an expert in parliaments, rather than on how people get into them,
but here it goes anyway.

I think one of the factors, from what I have read of the literature about small jurisdictions, is
45 they refer to a hyper-personalisation of parliaments in small countries and that parties are harder
to establish – so that is one feature – and where parties are established, they tend to be in
support, or are support vehicles for local big political figures, rather than programmatic parties. So
that is one of the difficulties. I think that has been drawing on research in Caribbean countries
and Malta.

50 What then happens is where you have, say, a majoritarian electoral system, that can embed a
local elite who then use their power of patronage to make appointments and so on, and they can
be very hard to remove. Then when they are removed, quite often the opposition behaves in a
very similar manner.

55 **Mr Fallaize:** I agree with what Alastair has said. I think in our case, in Guernsey, the challenges
are compounded because we have this unusual situation of not having political parties. There was
an attempt or an experiment to have parties or coalitions of candidates at the last election, but
essentially we have, for decades anyway, not had political parties and most candidates who were
elected at the last election were not in parties. In addition to that, we do not have an executive
60 system of government.

The first of those creates this challenge of a link between what is decided at the ballot box and
what happens in Government. So where you have parties, as Alastair has referred to, they put out
programmes for government in advance of the election, and whichever party or coalition of
parties wins a majority of seats has a mandate to implement their programme for government. In
65 Guernsey, in the absence of parties, we do not have anything like that. So all of that work on
policy development and the programme for government is being done post-election. I think that
makes it even harder.

The absence of executive government, which can be argued as a good thing or a bad thing,
but certainly it means that there is a difficult trade-off in Guernsey between democracy and
70 leadership. So whereas almost everywhere else people are used to electing parliamentarians to sit
in parliament and the parliament then, through whatever mechanism, is effectively electing the
jurisdiction's leadership, in Guernsey we have fused those things together.

So I think, in addition to the points Alastair makes, those things are more complicated in
Guernsey than anywhere else.

Prof. Bales: I do not think I am the expert – these chaps are – but I am a voter and I think one of the key and fundamental parts about this, and also having lived in other countries, is that democracies should be representative. It should be representative of some place or some ideological unit or some political party in the sense that a person knows, in a sense, who or what they are representing when they cast their vote, as opposed to simply casting a vote for the person that they may or may not like or what they might have said at one point.

It is a tricky one because, again, Guernsey is almost unique, in many ways, in that once the link to parish and Douzaine and so forth was severed, it left us with ... In another country, they might have said, 'Well, proportional representation would work fine because we can represent ourselves according to the group of people' like the Marxists, for example, who might ... That was a joke – she was recently called a Marxist, that's all. That you could say, 'Well, at least I'm representing my comrades.' But we have neither, in many ways. We have neither, except informal or slightly formal coteries of buddies, or sometimes interest groups, and that begins to put you into backrooms and chattering between people to make deals. I think that is where it would lead to.

We need to find a way to ground ourselves, to put our feet soundly on the dirt of our parish and/or our ideological or political senses and orientations.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

This follows on to some of the comments that you have made. Way back in 2007, the Electoral Reform Society said:

There are possible models for all-island voting, but unfortunately, they all present significant practical difficulties, because of the size of the States of Deliberation, and the lack of political parties in Guernsey.

Were they right?

Prof. Bales: I think so. I think that there is a potential for some kind of compromise, in the sense that there could be a return to linkages to geographical or parish or Douzaine linkage, but also some at large, a bit like the old Conseillers, that would represent subgroups possibly, and people would be able to run Island-wide, but in a very small group of those – 10 or 12, something like that – within the States. That was something that I put in my evidence and said here is a possibility.

I am no expert, some people have been around this track a few more times, but I think it would be one of those things that would be worth considering, in part because you would be able to say, are there people who are *truly* expert in a specific topic or issue that *really* has an impact on Islanders? And if there was someone who knew everything about healthcare and how it was provided or the education system and so forth, I am not saying that States' Members do not become expert, but if someone had, say, worked in a space for a very long time –

The Chair: Those are the people who you would see standing Island-wide, then?

Prof. Bales: Potentially, yes.

The Chair: It seems to me it might be difficult as to how to restrict people from standing Island-wide if they did not have those great specialisms. And also the extent to which you think people might vote for somebody because of those specialisms or they might just vote for them because they like them.

Prof. Bales: I think that is always the case, sorry. (**The Chair:** Yes.) When people go to vote for anyone, some people like them, some people do not. Some people actually understand who they are voting for, some people have read their record, some people have not. That is always a crapshoot in democracy.

125 **The Chair:** Michelle.

Ms Le Clerc: I think Matt wants to come in on –

130 **Mr Fallaize:** What they also said, the Electoral Reform Society – I think I am quoting from the same paper that you did – (*Interjection by the Chair*) they said:

... a nationwide constituency system ...

– which is what Island-wide voting is –

... could only feasibly operate in Guernsey if one of the following conditions were met:

- Candidates coalesced into political parties ...
- There were fewer seats to be filled (however any more than twenty seats would make any ... [system] problematic ...

135 The issue obviously that they were getting at was not that there is anything particularly meritorious or otherwise about parties, but that you have to try to restrict the number of choices that face voters and that if voters are faced with more than, in their opinion, 20 choices, it becomes extremely difficult to make an objective judgement comparing parties or candidates with each other.

140 So there are pros and cons of Island-wide voting, but I think what, as a jurisdiction, we have to recognise is that we now have a radically different electoral system from almost everywhere else in the world and that is bound to have a significant impact on our democracy and the functioning of our Government.

145 **Mr Doherty:** Can I just come back to a point Matt made about democracy and leadership. I think one of the points which Matt identified was the lack of an executive, that parties form because they want to capture power, whether they are programmatic parties or whether they are just a cheer group for an elite, but what they want is to storm the citadel and grab power. That is not what happens here. It is a very strange lacuna in the setup.

On the point about the Electoral Reform Society, Gibraltar has peninsular-wide voting and it has got 17 seats, but they actually have parties as well.

150 **Ms Le Clerc:** We have discussed some of the difficulties of Island-wide voting. Do you think those difficulties can be overcome? I think, Prof. Bales, you have already touched on that. You were saying link back to the Douzaine, you talk about Conseillers, so just an open question: do you think they can be overcome and what system might be the better system perhaps going forward, if we have got any suggestions?

155 **Prof. Bales:** The one tiny thing I would say, and I say this from decades of experience of doing outreach research of all different types with large populations, if I had attempted to do some kind of information-gathering exercise using something like the ballot in the last election, it would have been chaos. It would not have necessarily led me to anything. If we were able somehow to design a system that could allow people to really understand what they were about with so many people to vote, 80 and more, possibly. But I cannot imagine what it would be and I have spent an awful lot of time working on how best to reach broad populations in a way where everyone will understand what they are being asked.

165 **Ms Le Clerc:** Matt?

Mr Fallaize: There is a preliminary question, which is do you want to have Island-wide representatives. In a way, I am not sure that question was ever satisfactorily answered politically. What are Island-wide representatives giving you which district representatives cannot?

170 But just parking that to one side, if you want to have Island-wide representatives, and particularly if you want all Members of the States to be Island-wide Deputies, I always took the view that you had to split the elections. For example, one of the options in the Referendum – I think it was Option E – was to have 12 or 13 seats elected every two years. There was a potential weakness of that, if it is a weakness, which was that a term would be six years long and that is not
175 ideal. But it would at least get the number of candidates and the number of votes down to a manageable number while protecting whatever is perceived to be special or advantageous about the Island-wide mandate.

My suspicion is that if the system is retained, with all Deputies being elected Island-wide, not at the next election, and maybe not at the one after that, but certainly sooner rather than later,
180 I think there will be a change in the timetable of elections, because people will get fed up with having a hundred candidates and 38 votes.

The Chair: Alistair.

185 **Mr Doherty:** I thought Option E – speaking as a complete outsider here – unless political parties develop and are able to be sustained, I can see the merit in Option E. Because in a sense what we have with political parties is at certain moments in life, there is a sea change in the tide of public opinion: 1945, 1979, 1997, you can see it in the UK. There are these swings and that is represented by, not just a shift of government, but the mood of the electorate has changed and
190 that gets captured.

When you do not have political parties, I think there is a greater emphasis on the States being representational of its electorate. The problem is you are in a constant electoral cycle, but the benefit is that you are actually reflecting what the current thinking in the population is by topping
up every two years.

195 **Ms Le Clerc:** So for the development of political parties, what is actually needed? We did not see parties in Guernsey; they were loose parties. They were not, in the sense understood like UK parties. So what do you think is needed to develop parties in the Island for Island-wide voting?

200 **Mr Fallaize:** Some desire to have ... Does the electorate want parties? (**Prof. Bales:** Yes.) Parties do not generally emerge top down. Normally they are bottom-up movements, either because a group of people, as Alastair has said, want to obtain power, whatever that means in Guernsey, or because there is a group in society who feel underrepresented, which is how parties of the centre-left, labour parties, typically came into being, because the working class felt
205 underrepresented. I just do not think those dynamics exist in Guernsey, and so the creation of parties has looked very much like a top-down exercise.

I might be very wrong, but my impression is that the prevailing view in Guernsey is very sceptical about political parties and I was always sceptical that you could hold them together after the election. I think the first one, the Partnership of Independents, evaporated after about a week
210 and the Guernsey Party after maybe a year. So the experiment with parties to that extent has not lasted, has it?

The Chair: No, indeed. We had 16 party members elected and I believe there are two now.

215 **Mr Fallaize:** Yes, right.

Prof. Bales: Could I go back to the rolling notion, though. When you were talking about an election every couple of years and so forth, what I just want to say, because I have worked on the American side as well, the way the Senate is organised in the United States is that senators are
220 elected for six years, but one third are elected every two years. So it rolls, but they actually stay in for quite a long time and it gives it a stability and so forth.

Mr Fallaize: It doesn't look very stable at the moment! *(Laughter)*

225 **Prof. Gales:** No, but I have to say we are in some kind of alternate universe at the moment over there and I could not interpret it or anything. But in the past, for at least a couple of hundred years, it worked pretty well.

Mr Fallaize: Yes.

230 **The Chair:** The current troubles are not due necessarily to the electoral system?

Prof. Gales: No. Well, some other parts of the electoral system, but not that.

235 **Mr Fallaize:** It has been stable, traditionally.

Prof. Gales: Yes, it has been stable, and the Senate particularly so. So the idea of rolling, where people would understand and there is always a continuity and you do not end up with a dramatic shift where you bring in a lot of newbies and a lot of other people go out, and then you have this lived experience and programmes and policies can continue over time, that seems a possibility.

240 **Mr Doherty:** I think for parties, there are two sides to this. I come back to this point about power. Parties want power, whether they are good parties, meaning they have a programme, or whether they are, in my view, bad parties, meaning they are just elites and they are a popular figure with supporters. But whatever the nature of a party is, it wants to get power and if there is no executive form of government, I do not think parties are that interested.

245 Then, of course, the other point about sustaining parties is there has to be some form of discipline and collective responsibility and that seems to be where it broke down here, or one of the factors.

250 **Ms Le Clerc:** I was originally on SACC with Matt at the time, and I think what happened was that we went to the Referendum without necessarily having in place procedures, rules, protocols for parties to establish themselves. So would you agree that maybe that should have happened first to give greater guidelines to potential parties, perhaps, Matt, with hindsight?

255 **Mr Fallaize:** Yes. I think if you are in an environment with parties, they need to be quite strongly regulated. That is typical, around expenditure, behaviours, candidate selection, **(Ms Le Clerc:** Manifestoes.) manifestoes. So we organised the election, or the States did, really on the basis that there would not be parties because there never had been. You could argue that you cannot pre-empt parties. You cannot establish rules for parties until parties emerge. I am not sure whether there will be parties at the next election, but I think there will be even more reservations given what happened last time.

260 **Prof. Bales:** And I would remind ourselves that there are parties and then there are parties. So you have the British and American systems, where you have these adversarial pairs of parties fundamentally. And then, I have been fortunate enough to work with the Norwegian parliament and some a couple of times with the Dutch parliament. There the proportional representation means that it takes some time for things to occur and to work through the political process, but when they reach that point of real compromise and agreement, it sticks.

270 It is not thrown out at the next election, tend to be. I was very impressed with how it can really work. It took longer, but it tended to go deeper and then it tended to be permanent, or as close to permanent as political actions can get, because the agreement had been reached across the proportions of the different political groups.

275 **Mr Doherty:** Ms Le Clerc, it is a bit chicken and egg, I think. I imagine it would have been rather hard to go into this Referendum, where parties had not existed, but to say, 'And if parties come about, they will have these privileges in the States.' Because that is what happens. Political groups are recognised and they are given certain privileged positions in a parliament. Coming from a basis of all independents to that would have been slightly difficult, I think.

280 **Advocate Green:** If we could go back to the 2020 Election and the survey that we commissioned, according to that survey the most used and the most useful source of information employed by the voter when deciding how to vote was, by quite a considerable margin, the States manifesto booklet. The question really is does that surprise you; and what, if anything, does that reveal? Matt?

285 **Mr Fallaize:** No, it does not surprise me, because it was really the only organised way that voters had of obtaining information. Under the previous system, districts, or parishes before that, there were hustings where all of a voter's candidates were put in front of the voter. It was obviously much easier to knock on most, if not all, doors. Not every candidate did, but there were a large proportion which did. And there were more candidates who delivered or sent out their manifestoes. So the opportunities for the voter to see their candidates side by side and compare them, there were many more. The candidate booklet really became the only way in 2020.

The candidate booklet was, I suppose, the right thing to do in the sense that recognising this potential gap of information the States had to do something, and the election was, let's
295 acknowledge, very well organised from a logistical point of view. But the booklet was two pages per candidate, half of which was taken up with a photo and all that stuff about where the person lived or what their age was, all that background information. The space for the candidate to explain their policies was minimal.

What that means is that you ... Was it Shelaine I think the other day at your first hearing or
300 your second hearing who said the way in which people will make decisions at elections in that kind of environment becomes much more simplistic, because you just do not have the material and the way of comparing candidates against each other. So I think what that has meant is that the choices that people are making at elections are reduced to much more simple considerations.

At the last election, if you said, 'I don't want two schools and I don't want GST' and you were a
305 reasonable candidate, you were almost certain to get in, because it lends itself to this checklist election where the only way in which voters are able to compare their choices is to use a small number of criteria on very key issues. I do not think there is a way around that if you present 120 candidates to a voter.

310 **The Chair:** Yes. That leads very strongly into, in fact you virtually answered the next question, which is do you think there is an issue with people just relying on a two-page document that they possibly have not even written themselves to inform such important decisions? Clearly you do, Matt, from what you said, but what do you think the fallout of that was?

315 **Mr Doherty:** Could I just come in on something that Matt said? I thought it was interesting that the couple of things you picked out were both negative, that if somebody said, 'I don't want this and I don't want that' they would get in. I think what is much harder when I read the pamphlet ... What is good about it is it is just two pages, it is set out in identical ways, you can compare like with like, but in the absence of political parties, if somebody said, 'These are the
320 things I want' I would look at that and think, yes, how is that going to come about in a non-party system? So I thought it was interesting actually that the impact was a negative. Maybe you did not mean it that way, but it was voting against something, rather than for.

Prof. Bales: And it was only the version of what you had in the paper. I tried to be a very
325 assiduous voter that time around, and so I would go to all the speed dating, whatever they were

called – quick hustings or whatever it was called. What I found was a few times that the person that I thought would make a great candidate, when I got to actually talk to them, I realised, oh my goodness, I do not want that person at all. And occasionally, people who I was not so sure actually ... But if you leave the humanity out of it, it is hard to get the true sense of it, especially when everybody has been reduced to two pages. So that is an interesting problem as well.

The Chair: I think that is a very interesting point, because compared to the previous election, there is not this face-to-face element, as Matt has said, but if you are recruiting for a job in industry or something, yes, you start with the CV, but then you want to see the person face to face. That section of it was almost absent from Island-wide voting. Do you think there is any remedy to that?

Mr Fallaize: No. I thought it was a hugely demoralising experience, because I had been used to essentially knocking on the door of every elector. Of course, lots of people are not in, but even if a third of people are, you end up having hundreds, if not over a thousand conversations over the course of four or five weeks. And you know that you are reaching a very large proportion of your electorate. Even if you flew around the Island like Deputy Roffey did at the last election, where he did about 12 hours every day or more, I do not know how many people he got to, but I bet it was not more than a quarter or a third of houses.

I very much got the sense that it was an election really being fought on social media or somewhere away from where the candidates actually were, because you just could not have that discourse with the electorate that you could in the previous system.

We are talking about the disadvantages, there are advantages of Island-wide voting, but there are these real practical challenges, yes.

The Chair: Yes. We will come to the advantages shortly, but in our survey, leaving out the 'don't knows', two thirds of the respondents said that the number of votes each person has available to them at Island-wide voting should be reduced, and of those who thought the number should be reduced, 83% thought it should be 20 or less. Does this response surprise you and what is your view on the matter?

Prof. Bales: It does not surprise me, I might have said exactly the same thing, and in the note that I sent in I was saying I think there are probably ways to reduce that, or to break it. Or, if you went to rolling, that would also reduce the number. I think there are probably three or four different ways to reduce that grappling with everybody in the phonebook situation. But I think that is an important part of it, because it was unwieldy and overwhelming for a lot of people.

I said in my note, people with very busy lives, people with small kids, you think of them trying to work their way through those booklets over time and make sense of everything. I am not trying to disparage their focus, just that time can be hard for a lot of people. I thought it was hard enough for me and I was trying to really devote time to it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Advocate Green: Matt, do you want to come in?

Mr Fallaize: Yes. There is, instinctively, an attraction to that because you have the sense that it would reduce the number of wasted votes. People thinking, 'I've got 38 votes, so I better use them. There are 10 people I really would like to vote for and then I'm going to sprinkle around 28 like confetti, essentially just avoiding the names of the people I really want to get out' I think that was probably the psyche of quite a lot of voters.

So there is an attraction to that, but on the other side, the practical issue is not really the number of votes, it is the number of candidates. The challenge that faces the voter is making an

objective comparison between 119 candidates. That is the challenge, and whether the voter has one vote or 38 does not change this challenge of objectively comparing the candidates.

380 The last thing I would say on this is I think giving voters fewer votes than they have seats to fill – I am trying to think – that is an unconventional approach. I am not sure that is used in many elections. Gibraltar do, (**Mr Doherty:** Yes.) but with parties. We now have a really unconventional electoral system, I would be reluctant to see us heaping even more unorthodox solutions on top of what we have already got.

385 **Mr Doherty:** I think there is quite a lot we do not know still. So all these people say they had too many votes, but I have a feeling that quite a lot of people used all those votes. What we need to know is why. Maybe it was an 'Anybody but Matt' vote – sorry, Matt, but –

390 **Mr Fallaize:** I think it was.

Mr Doherty: Whereas some people say that voters were flying blind in making their choices, were they? Maybe they were voting for a political party or maybe they were voting for anybody but supporters of the education reform, in which case that is slightly different from flying blind and voting randomly. I do not think we know that yet.

The Chair: Some of the comment we received was that people were using all of their votes in an effort to keep people out, knowing that other people also had 38 votes to be able to do that. But I suppose – I do not know, I am just putting this to you – if everyone had 20 votes, then they would all know that they are all up against the same limit, so it is fair. I think that was the point there.

400 So you are saying, Matt, that ... clearly reducing votes is not going to affect the number of candidates you have got to wade through, but you are suggesting that it might stop people sprinkling their later votes around with less consideration?

405 **Mr Fallaize:** I think yes. Logically, the fewer votes people have, the more likely a greater proportion of their votes are to be taken up with candidates they are positively voting for rather than candidates they are choosing as their 30th or 38th choice.

410 **The Chair:** So a more considered decision, possibly?

Mr Fallaize: I think that could well arise, but I would still be sceptical about another quite unorthodox approach.

415 **The Chair:** Interestingly, in the document we referred to, the Electoral Reform Society from 2007, one of the mitigations they give, if Guernsey is insistent on going down the road of Island-wide voting, is to have fewer votes. (**Mr Fallaize:** Yes.) So that is a possibility.

Ms Le Clerc: Can I just –?

420 **The Chair:** Yes, please do.

Ms Le Clerc: It was just picking up on earlier comments about one potential solution on Island-wide voting was this every two years. Of course, there would be an extra cost to that. But how significantly do you think that would reduce ...? Part of the problem is this choosing from 118 candidates. If we went to that rolling Island-wide voting, yes, you would have fewer people actually voted in every two years, but what is the likelihood that those candidates are still going to be as large and, in fact, you then end up having to pick, say, 10 candidates from 70 people putting themselves forward?

Mr Fallaize: I do not know who it was on Monday who said they thought that the number of candidates will be fewer at the next election. I think that is probably true. There must have been a novelty factor. So I do not necessarily say that the number will settle at around 120. If you do have rolling elections and you divide the seats in the States into thirds, then of course there would be 26 people already sitting in the States who would not be standing for election. You would still have a large number of candidates, but I suspect that you could get it down to something like 50, which is materially different to 100 or 120.

The disadvantage I do not think is having an election every two years – Guernsey used to have elections every three years, when Deputies' terms were three years. I think the big challenge, for someone who wanted to persuade the electorate of that kind of system, is moving away from the concept of a general election, because every time you go to the polls, two thirds of your seats are untouchable. You cannot have any influence on them.

The Chair: Do you think that would trouble people?

Mr Fallaize: I would think there would be a perception of a deficit of democracy, and that would have to be countered by those favouring it.

Mr Doherty: I think in a situation where you have completely eschewed the idea of parties, that is just not going to happen, I could see it being viewed as we are maintaining our representational role, that we are constantly in touch with the electorate. But on reducing the number, Richard Digard said these are all workarounds, and they are in a sense; that he thinks it is a flawed system, but how can we work around the problems.

Two of the obvious ways of reducing the numbers seem to be completely discounted. One is putting up money for a deposit – that idea seems to go nowhere – and then the other one is getting a load of nominations. But when I look at the numbers of votes that everybody gets, everybody here seems to have a couple of thousand friends. So the idea of saying we need nominations, you would get them, wouldn't you?

Then the other thing, Richard Digard's suggestion was about an induction programme. I do not know whether that is both a workaround, hoping that some people will drop out, and also a good idea in itself, I guess.

Advocate Green: If we could move on slightly, the question I have got here is to what extent do you think that the decision to hold a referendum on the electoral reform system in Guernsey was a parallel to the decision to hold a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union? And this notion – perhaps a flawed notion – that, 'Let's put it to a referendum, let's put it to bed, let's have a decision and then stop talking about it.' What is your take on that and whether it is a direct parallel, and whether we have ended up in a situation in Guernsey where we have really not put the issue to bed?

Prof. Bales.

Prof. Bales: That was some years ago and I had not been in the Island as long as I have now. Coming from the outside, I thought, I have to admit, when that came up, 'Something's dicey here. There's some sort of stitch-up going on.' I do not understand the local politics well enough because I am new and I do not understand all these personal relationships that go on across family lines and church affiliations and so forth, but I smelt something, and it was not nice, right from the beginning when I confronted this, after being in different other political situations and other different types. I could not quite understand the true logic behind it. I kept trying to take it apart and say, 'What? How could this be better?' To my eye, I could not find the good in it. I kept wondering who is pushing this and why are they pushing it now?

Advocate Green: Any further reflections, Alistair, on that?

Mr Doherty: I think there is a huge difference, in that the decision on whether to have Island-wide voting or not is a matter entirely for you. There is no other party to the decision. With Brexit, there is the UK's decision to leave and if you are talking about rejoining, there is the EU, they will have a view on that. I personally do not think the EU will be interested in an application from the UK for quite a while, actually.

Advocate Green: Matt, do you think there is something in that perceived reason for holding the Referendum – 'Let's put it to bed' – but that then has not really worked here?

Mr Fallaize: If you look at how it came about, the States were debating a requête for, I think it was, seven seats to be elected Island-wide –

Advocate Green: This is the Arrun Wilkie requête?

Mr Fallaize: Yes. And deep into the debate, an amendment was created to have every seat elected Island-wide, I think on the bizarre idea of having one election of an experiment in that way and then going back to districts the following election, but anyway. The States voted in favour of that amendment.

That was unexpected, I think, and the idea of a referendum came from Heidi Soulsby and I having a conversation, saying it is extraordinary that really on the back of a fag packet the States have just voted to adopt this system of everyone being elected Island-wide. Surely there should not be quite that much of a radical change to the electoral system unless the electorate has said that is what it wants. That is where the idea of a referendum was born.

The parallel with Brexit was not really to try and put the issue to bed forever, but it was to avoid the problem that the UK got itself into post the referendum result of the Parliament then saying, 'Okay, Brexit has been supported in a referendum, but we don't really have any idea what type of Brexit that means.' (**Advocate Green:** Right.)

The fear that those of us who were working on the Referendum had was that if it was a yes/no referendum, yes would win, so the public would say, 'Yes, we want Island-wide voting' and the States would then spend years, literally years, (*Interjection by Advocate Green*) deciding what type of Island-wide voting does this mean. Does it mean all seats, some seats, half of the seats elected every two years, all seats elected every four years or whatever it was.

So the idea was, if we have got to have this Referendum, let's emerge from it with absolute clarity about the system of Island-wide voting the public wants. To that extent, I think the Referendum worked, because after the Referendum result, nobody argued about what the system should be. It was clear the direction that had been given and the States got on and implemented it, and implemented it, logistically, very well.

Advocate Green: If we fast forward to the survey that we have done and the views that are coming out in terms of a certain level of disgruntlement with the system that we have got, do you think there is a sense that you are always going to have a situation here that people are not really happy with the system that is in place? They are always going to be clutching for some possible alternative that may or may not be practical? Do you think there is a sense that people are just unhappy with the States in general and maybe that then filters through to the electoral system as well? Is there something in that?

Mr Doherty: So that is like the idea that a referendum is always ... you always have people who are just voting against the government, no matter what the question is. I was just going to ask – sorry, I should not be asking questions, but – the Referendum was ... the real question was about Island-wide voting, but then all these other options were put in. And I suppose my question was, were they real runners or were they there just to pad out the form, as it were?

535 **Mr Fallaize:** No. The proposal was that if the turnout exceeded 40%, the States would accept the result as binding and once that got through the States, I do not think there was any doubt that whichever option won the Referendum was going to be implemented. What was your question, Chris, sorry?

540 **Advocate Green:** Is it not always the case that people are always going to be against the system that is in place now?

545 **Mr Fallaize:** Yes, I think Guernsey suffers from that particularly. Because of the absence of parties, if people get fed up with the Government, they cannot say, like they can in other places, 'We're fed up with the party of government, we'll kick them out.' What tends to happen is that the permanent features of our Government system are criticised. The institution of the States, the role of a Deputy, the voting system, the system of government, they all absorb the criticism which in other jurisdictions the governing party would absorb. So yes, that is why those issues keep coming back time and again, I think.

550 **The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.
Michelle.

555 **Ms Le Clerc:** Yes, a question for Prof. Bales. You said in your submission that you believed a supermajority should have been required in order to change the electoral system. Can you expand on that? I think you were referring probably to the US Constitution.

560 **Prof. Bales:** And other countries' constitutions (**Ms Le Clerc:** Yes.) as well. I only noted that because there is a certain safety, when you are doing something that could dramatically alter democratic processes and dramatically alter the quality of representation of the individual voter, you need to be able to protect that, from political attack or just not thinking it through clearly enough. For that reason, I would say why not a two thirds, one third, or something like that? I think that has been a very important thing in a lot of countries and has kept sometimes bad things away and good things away as well. But sometimes good things can also pass through that.

565 I have to say, though, when you are confronting five different options, and then there is no sense of we need to make sure we really have a clear majority coming down on which one of these five options, and it ends up in a situation where you wipe two or three out and then you are at a two-horse race for the last two and it goes to 52/48. (*Interjections*)

570 **Mr Fallaize:** It was.

Prof. Bales: I do not think that is good democracy, personally.

575 **Mr Doherty:** If I understood Matt correctly, he would not call it a supermajority, but built into it was the idea that 40% had to vote in favour of the successful option. Is that right?

The Chair: No.

Mr Fallaize: Forty per cent had to participate in the Referendum.

580 **Mr Doherty:** Ah, just to be a valid ...

Advocate Green and Ms Le Clerc: Yes.

585 **Mr Doherty:** Okay.

Mr Fallaize: But it took two attempts to get that threshold through the States, because there were quite a large number of States' Members who were arguing that the thing should be binding irrespective of the turnout.

590 **The Chair:** The next question, for Matt. In your policy letter, when you were President of SACC, on the Referendum in the last term, you did not list the so-called hybrid system as one of the five options in the actual policy letter. It was subsequently added to by in fact none other than Advocate Green in an amendment, and then it came second in the Referendum. Can you explain why your Committee saw fit to leave it out of your original five options?

595

Mr Fallaize: I think I am correct in saying that the basis on which we put forward the options was that in each option there should only be one class of States' Member. So either all Island-wide Deputies or all district Deputies, possibly informed by the difficulties Jersey have had over a long period of time with having different classes of States' member. Guernsey had had different classes of States' Member – Douzaine representatives, Conseillers and Deputies – and I think it was felt that that would just be a retrograde step.

600

I was not surprised it came second in the Referendum once Chris, and I think possibly Roger Perrot –

605 **Advocate Green:** Richard Graham ... *[Inaudible]*

Mr Fallaize: Oh, Richard Graham, of course. Yes – had inserted it. And a small prediction: I think that may very well be the system that Guernsey ends up with.

610 **The Chair:** Because it is a compromise?

Mr Fallaize: Because I think it will be very difficult to persuade people that there should not be any Island-wide mandate, having had Island-wide seats, but I think the practical difficulties of electing everybody Island-wide on one day, there is a reasonable chance that that may push the States into looking for a compromise and the most obvious one is to have some seats elected Island-wide and some seats in parishes or districts.

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The Chair: But once we are on an electoral system from 1994, that hybrid system, essentially, just lasted six years with falling turnout, according to your report. (**Mr Fallaize:** Yes.) Do you think it would be wise to go back to it then?

620

Mr Fallaize: No.

The Chair: Would you like to expand on that?

625

Mr Fallaize: Because I think there is a problem having different classes of States' Member. Our system, as others have explained, we do not have a separate executive from our parliament and invariably, if you had 10 or 12 seats elected Island-wide, the understanding would be that those were the people who should hold the most senior roles in the States. And there is not very much correlation at all between electing representatives to a parliament and senior people who are sitting in the camp in one system or leading Committees in our system.

630

So I think there are real problems. It would work well on election day, but I think there are problems with it post-election in trying to form a Government.

635 **The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

A question for all of you, perhaps. What do you each see as the principal advantage and the principal disadvantage of Island-wide voting? We have not talked much about the advantages,

you mentioned that before, and I think before we run out of time, quite shortly, we perhaps should have a look at that.

640

Mr Doherty: I suppose you can kick people out in a strange way with tactical voting. You can remove people who you do not want and the concomitant is that you can pile up votes for people who you really like. But the odd thing there is you think, 'Well, what then?' because you do not have a States which is a hierarchy and you then give rise to perhaps a public expectation that those people who score the highest should be in positions of senior positions. And that has not happened.

645

The Chair: I think you are right on that, because that is certainly something that came through in comments on our survey, where a lot of people said why did the person who polled the highest not get the top job? (**Mr Doherty:** Yes.) So that is a feeling, and I think that builds, in a small way, from what Matt said earlier about a hybrid system: there will be an expectation, because there is an expectation already within Island-wide voting.

650

Mr Doherty: So you get that expectation.

In terms of removing people, that is a perfectly desirable, necessary part of democracy. I think it is a slightly strange subterfuge you have to go through in order to get there, that you end up voting for unknowns in order to achieve that effect.

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The Chair: Kevin.

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Prof. Bales: I have to say this discussion has been really informative and educational for me, and it has also led me to a particular thought, which is that having heard from the inside story and the histories of a lot of the different changes, of all the systems that we are talking about that could be Island-wide, the only one that to me seems to be both logical and most representative and democratically sound would be one that involved rolling elections. Because it would reduce the numbers that had to be considered in each election, it would have a long-term stability because of the overlapping tenure and so forth.

665

I would like to think that through more, but I keep thinking through which one would work out of everything that we have mentioned and every one of them hits a rock pretty quickly.

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The Chair: Can I pull you back to the question on one advantage, one disadvantage of Island-wide voting? Or the principal advantage and disadvantage.

Prof. Bales: That is a tough one, just because I am not sure there is an advantage, unless we go to where we started at the very beginning of this, which was if you had political parties, that would make sense and so forth, or other ways to break it out, but otherwise, I certainly did not feel like I was seeing any kind of advantage of the one that we had.

675

The Chair: Thank you.

680

Mr Fallaize: The advantage is the opportunity to have some influence over every seat. Every voter has an influence over every seat. I do not think that means you have more democracy. I worked out, if everyone who votes uses all their votes, one vote that is cast in an Island-wide election represents one 1,000,000th of a say over the outcome in parliament and in a district system I think it is one 25,000th.

685

So actually, what is happening with Island-wide voting versus district voting is that the voter is getting a much smaller say over a larger number of seats, whereas in district voting, the voter is getting a larger say over a smaller number of seats. But certainly you have *an* influence over every

690 seat in your parliament, and so that is an advantage of Island-wide voting, which in the absence of parties voters cannot otherwise enjoy.

The obvious disadvantage logistically is the very large number of candidates, which we have discussed. In terms of the integrity of an election and electing the best possible Government, the biggest disadvantage is that you completely break down the proximity between the elector, the voter, and the candidate. It becomes an election fought at such greater distance than was ever the case previously and my view is that the voter is therefore less informed about the candidates and is less likely to make informed choices.

700 If I am going to vote for someone, I would quite like to speak to them before I am going to vote. I think through a hustings, through speaking to people on the doorstep, you can tell who is the serious candidate, who has done their homework and who is chancing it a bit. That is very much harder in an Island-wide election.

Mr Doherty: Presumably, in the absence of parties, if somebody is using 38 votes, there is a very real chance that in those 38 candidates are people whose policies are completely incompatible with each other.

The Chair: Yes, but I think there is a tendency that that may well have happened under the previous system as well.

710 **Mr Fallaize:** Yes, I think there is a history of people voting for candidates with diametrically opposed views. (**Advocate Green:** Yes.) That happened a lot. I voted in the Vale for candidates with diametrically opposed views because actually, the most important thing when you are electing to a parliament about your whole parliament is that you have a diversity of views and that the people elected are capable of running the Island. In a sense, that is more important than their specific policies.

The Chair: Do you think the majority of people approach it in that way?

720 **Mr Fallaize:** I think they certainly did in the past. I think that when you have this much closer proximity between the elector and the candidate, there is a much higher chance that the voter will say, 'I don't particularly agree with you on this issue or that issue, but taking a rounded view, I think that you are worth a seat in the States.' Whereas when you put more distance between the voter and the candidate, it is more likely the voter will make their decision just by going down a checklist. 'Which way did you vote on that? What's your opinion on that?' – that is the way I voted because there was not any other way of having a really good, informed understanding of all the candidates.

725 **The Chair:** Okay. I think we are going to have to bring it to a close there. It has been absolutely fascinating. Thank you to all three of you. We will now take a short break and reconvene just after three o'clock.

*The Committee adjourned at 2.59 p.m.
and resumed at 3 p.m.*

EVIDENCE OF

**Mr David Piesing, former Guernsey Party advisor;
Deputy Peter Roffey, States' Member;
Mr Nigel de la Rue, IWV Referendum Committee Chair**

The Chair: Good afternoon again, everyone. We have got a session now on political parties and if I could just move straight into asking the witnesses if they could introduce themselves, a little brief bio, starting with Mr Piesing.

Thank you.

Mr Piesing: Thank you.

David Piesing; I was an advisor to the Guernsey Party from mid-2020 until February 2023.

Deputy Roffey: Deputy Peter Roffey; I have been in and out of the States since 1982 and never been a member of any Guernsey political party. *(Laughter)*

Mr de la Rue: Nigel de la Rue; I chaired a working group on behalf of an emerging Island party to discuss the merits and demerits of each of the five Referendum options that were put to the population and to draw some conclusions from that. Apart from that, I am just interested as a voter all my adult life in Guernsey.

The Chair: Thank you.

Okay, we will move straight into the questions then. So the first question: does Island-wide voting need political parties to function properly?

Deputy Roffey: Probably, yes. I would rather have neither, I have to say, but it is an electoral system that was designed to bring about political parties. We had people, Mr Meerveld for instance, was quite open about it. He wanted to move to this sort of system because the only way it would work would be with parties, was what he was saying. Therefore, by changing the electoral system, it would force a change towards a party system and that was the real objective.

What we have ended up with is an electoral system designed for parties, that people think can only work properly with parties, but Guernsey does not seem thus far to be particularly enamoured with parties. So we are stuck with an electoral system which does not really fit a system of all independents, and yet we have got all independents. So it is not a good place to be, in my opinion.

The Chair: To what extent do you think the electorate understood that it was meant to work with parties, if indeed that was the case?

Deputy Roffey: No, I do not think that was the main reason the electorate voted for it. I think that was the main reason some States' Members pushed for it. I think the electorate just felt they wanted it to stick their oar in in relation to every single person being elected or, as was said earlier today, perhaps who would not be elected. And they got frustrated that if they were in a district, they could not help somebody be elected to the States or help chuck somebody out of the States. Therefore, what I was getting was that was mainly on that level.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr de la Rue: Yes, I agree with most of what Deputy Roffey has said there. The attractiveness of Island-wide voting was going to be based on the need for political parties to make it work. I am not convinced that the Island is not particularly enamoured with political parties, as he has just said, and I welcome this forum to be able to discuss the merits and demerits of that. But clearly

the fact that political parties have not emerged is why we are all together and why there is such a level of dissatisfaction with how Island-wide voting operated.

The Chair: Mr Piesing.

Mr Piesing: I think when the decision was made to go for Island-wide voting, of course we had no guarantee or no knowledge that any parties would actually even emerge. It is quite possible that there would not have been any. I agree with all of those comments, but my gut feeling is that it is probably too early to make the judgement on whether Island-wide voting needs political parties or whether political parties need Island-wide voting. I think it is very hard to determine a trend based on what was a novel election. Whether more parties will emerge for the next election and we will find out more and see more of a trend, is impossible to know at this stage.

The Chair: What would you feel, if parties do not emerge, first of all, how many elections do you think we should give it to see whether there is an emergence? And if they do not emerge, do you think that Island-wide voting could still carry on anyway?

Mr Piesing: Again, it is hard to know, because you might get the next election or the next two elections where there still are no parties, so you would be none the wiser. But I would have thought that any new electoral system probably needs at least two or three cycles before you can determine a trend. It could have been just down to who stood, it could have been down to voter inertia or just people being overwhelmed by the number of candidates. You might have had Island-wide voting and instead of 119 candidates there might have been only 80, for example, and the whole thing might have gone very differently in terms of how manageable it was. Did anybody really expect 119 candidates?

The Chair: No, I do not think so.

Mr Piesing: I did not. And were they attracted by dissatisfaction with the way Government was going? I do not know. We do not know. But 119 was a surprise.

The Chair: You looked as though you were about to say something, Deputy Roffey?

Deputy Roffey: I think a lot of people were attracted by thinking, why not give it a punt? We have got nothing to lose, we are going to get given some money – which did not used to happen – in order to do the campaign, we will not have to go through the trauma of sitting on a hustings because it will not be practical to organise. All we have to do is write something to go in a booklet, we might get in, who knows? What is to lose about it? Nobody is expecting me to knock on doors any more – I did, but there was no expectation. So I think that that might be one of the reasons why you got so many candidates.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr de la Rue: May I just add something there, Deputy Burford?

The Chair: Yes, please do.

Mr de la Rue: I do not think the only option is to carry on having Island-wide voting and waiting for parties to emerge. We do not have a written constitution of course, but we can legislate and we can encourage, we can incentivise the creation of political parties. There are many mechanisms, if one looks around the world, that operate and have operated in order to encourage the formation of political parties. I think if there is open discussion about the

830 advantages – which I am sure we are going to come on to – of having political parties, then we can make that work, if there is a will to make it work.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

835 So three parties fielded candidates at the last election, and 16 of the 38 successful candidates were party members – and there were a total of 40 candidates that were party members. Today, just three years on, two Members of the Assembly still belong to a party. What accounts for this apparent failure?

Deputy Roffey: I do not accept your premise that all of those Members who were elected
840 were members of parties in the sense that the rest of the world would know it. I think they were electoral support systems where people grouped together in order, even ... I think maybe actually the one party that was close to a real party was the one that got zero people elected, which was the Alliance Party, because they put forward a set of policies and said there was going to be collective responsibility and whipping and whatever. Whereas the others ... Guernsey Party was
845 probably slightly more towards that, but it certainly was not a party as it would be recognised elsewhere. The coalition of Independents was, I think, not really a party at all.

I just think when people are elected, in a small community, when people want them to do things, and they actually agree, they are just not going to turn around and say, 'No, that's not what my party is telling me to do.' They are going to act as independents. Even in Jersey, where it
850 is a bit more embedded, my understanding of the Jersey Democratic Alliance, whatever it is called – I am not sure what it is called, but – (**The Chair:** Reform?) Yes, Reform Jersey now. There is no collective responsibility, people are free to vote how they want. I do not think that is a party as it would be understood elsewhere.

855 **The Chair:** Okay. Because if there was a party whip, there is no real penalty to anyone for not upholding the whip.

Deputy Roffey: Losing the whip, I guess.

860 **The Chair:** Yes, but then you are still a States' Member and you are still in Government.

Deputy Roffey: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.
865 Michelle.

Ms Le Clerc: Some submissions to our call for evidence pointed at an increased influence of the Civil Service as a consequence of Island-wide voting. In the absence of political parties and a Government with its programme, is the Civil Service always likely to fill the vacuum? And in your
870 view, is that happening?

Deputy Roffey: I do not want to over-talk here, but ... Go, yes.

Mr de la Rue: Well, yes – and I did have something to say on the previous question, (**Ms Le
875 Clerc:** Oh, sorry.) which was simply that we cannot assess the merits and demerits of a party system on the back of what happened in the 2020 Election and what parties were formed. It is a much broader issue than that.

When it comes to whipping and party rules, we have to appreciate that what we are talking about when we use the word 'party' is not simply what is seen as a party in UK politics or
880 elsewhere in the world. We are covering a very wide definition which is included, in fact, in the guidance notes for the registration of political parties in Guernsey. I shall not bore you with

reading it out, but it is a very broad definition that includes lists and list systems around the world do not necessarily demand that members of the list vote according to a set policy. So there is not necessarily a whipping system. There is flexibility around that to differing degrees.

885 But when it comes to the influence of civil servants, and of course I am neither a civil servant, neither have I ever been a serving politician, it is difficult for me to comment on that, other than to say, yes, there certainly is a vacuum. Because there is no parliament that is not a Government in Guernsey. They are one in the same thing. And therefore, apart from what happens at Committee level, which is the formulation of policy in certain areas, there is no forum for the discussion of
890 policy amongst people who are either candidates for being elected or elected representatives or indeed other interested individuals. So there is not any transparent discussion that I am aware of, that I can point to, other than what is described as tribalism or collusion.

Ms Le Clerc: Okay.

895 Peter.

Deputy Roffey: I think the suggestion was that ... What were the surveys saying was leading to an increase in influence with civil servants?

900 **Ms Le Clerc:** Yes, our call for evidence indicates that there is an increased influence of the Civil Service over Government –

Deputy Roffey: As a result of?

905 **Ms Le Clerc:** – as a result of Island-wide voting. Because publicly there appears to be some vacuum.

Deputy Roffey: Indirectly, maybe. I think the influence of the Civil Service goes up when there is a large number of novice Deputies in the Assembly. People who have been around the block for quite a few times will not take nonsense from civil servants! I am not saying most civil servants
910 talk nonsense, but they have a working relationship and they are also actually more used to driving policy rather than ... I think sometimes newbies come in and they wanted to be a politician and then on day one do not seem to realise that the clue's in the name: that means you are meant to make policy. They must look to the Civil Service to tell them what should be happening inside
915 their departments or whatever else.

So if Island-wide voting increased, and I am not saying it did, what the reason was, and there was a large turnover in membership, but there may have been under a district system as well, then I think the more novices you have in, the more that creates a vacuum, for a year or two anyway, where the civil servants feel the need to come in and fill that vacuum.

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Mr Piesing: I would agree with that – that last point particularly. I think there is no doubt that people who are not familiar with the system will take time to get used to that system. That does create that opportunity for civil servants to have more influence over those individuals who simply do not know their way around the system and there is no way of getting experience other than to get experience. That is just the reality. So I totally agree with that point.
925

Deputy Roffey: But I also think there is a saloon bar wisdom that civil servants really want to run the Island. My experience is that civil servants actually want politicians who are strong-minded, know where they want to go and want to make policy. They feel far more comfortable
930 working like that, even if they may not necessarily disagree with them. I can think of one or two civil servants who do not fit, who have not over the years fitted that and should really have stood for election if they felt that strongly, but not the way, if you go into a public bar, you would think

that, 'Oh, the Civil Service is running the Island and making all the decisions.' I do not think it is true at all.

Ms Le Clerc: Okay. I think perhaps some of that had come ... We had a comment on Monday that a lot of the time now we see a spokesperson, rather than a named Deputy. But we will move on to the next question.

It appears from what has happened since the election in October 2020, that Island-wide voting did nothing to aid the development of successful parties – we have discussed that already. What do you think needs to happen to get successful parties? Perhaps Nigel –

Mr de la Rue: Perhaps I could kick off on that (**Ms Le Clerc:** Yes.) by just going back one stage. Richard Digard asked the question on Monday: why Island-wide voting? What was the perceived advantage going to be? I do not think that those who voted in the Referendum necessarily thought that the advantage would be the creation of political parties full stop. I believe that the electorate made a clear statement that they were more interested in Island-wide politics than they were parish or electoral district politics.

I think that, particularly among younger people, they are interested in political philosophy, in vision, in the direction of travel. Young people that I speak to, and I have young children – still not quite middle aged – who are engaged in politics, but worldwide or nationally. They have no interest whatsoever in what is happening in their parish.

During my time as an elector, I do not think I have ever written to my parish Deputies on a parish issue. I only want access to politicians to discuss Island-wide issues. It is because we are a small nation and we have all of the issues to confront as a small nation, of taxation, of education, health/social care, fighting poverty. We are an internationally recognised centre for financial services. And my experience, for example, of the 2012 Election in the Vale, was that I had to choose seven candidates from nine options. That is all I had to say in what happened in the Island.

And I was not alone. That may have improved in 2016 to choosing six from 11, but still, my say in how the Island is run was microscopic. I had no part to play and neither did I have a point to lobby my Deputies. So forgive me, just going back to why I feel that Island-wide voting ... what it was intended to achieve.

Ms Michelle Le Clerc, I am sorry, I have forgotten your exact question that I diverted myself away from.

Ms Le Clerc: It was just to say what do we need to make parties successful. (**Mr de la Rue:** Parties work.) Yes, what we need to make them work.

Mr de la Rue: That is the second leg of why Island-wide voting could have worked. There were two legs to it. One was give the option to the population to participate in choosing candidates to represent them in central Government, so they had 100% say, whereas they had only 15% say on a seven regional basis. They wanted to say what happened centrally. But that, I am afraid, and it has already been identified by the Electoral Reform Society, had to be accompanied by a party political system.

That was the conclusion of the working group I was on, which was why we did not think that to vote for Island-wide voting at that point, because there were no political parties, there was not time to form them efficiently, would have been a good idea. We had an option towards a gradualist approach. So we are halfway there – we got a half-baked solution.

Deputy Roffey: I am going to answer your question and respond to Nigel's first point, because I do not think when people were elected in districts it was ever any less a consideration of a candidate's Island-wide views. I have got elected six times in districts. Okay, the odd Vale issue, or later on south-east issue may have come up, but people were just choosing in districts who they thought was best to deal with the whole Island. It was not parochial politics in that sense. It was

985 just a way of ergonomically electing people to be in the Island parliament. I am not disagreeing that I do not think people are just interested in ... Some people are just interested in parochial matters, but I think very few are.

Sorry, again, I have got to remind myself of the second question. So we keep going ... Yes.

990 **Ms Le Clerc:** So if we continue with Island-wide voting and we go down the path of parties, we have seen already that those have not been successful, what do we need to do? What do we need to provide to make parties successful? What can we do?

995 **Deputy Roffey:** Tricky question for me, because I do not really want them to develop, so I may be better leaving that. Although I do see some of the advantages to parties, I just think in the Guernsey context they are vastly outweighed by the disadvantages. So I have not really put my mind to how to encourage something I do not want to happen.

1000 **Mr de la Rue:** Which I think is a valid point because we are putting the cart before the horse. We need to end up with that question, if we agree on what the advantages are.

Ms Le Clerc: Yes, but, Dave, (**Mr Piesing:** Yes.) you were there in establishing a party, helping to establish a party, and you have now seen that disintegrate. So what do you think you would do different next time, for example?

1005 **Mr Piesing:** I think the most important thing is to have started a lot earlier. The lead-in period probably is 18 months to two years before an election, not three to four months, because there is just far too much to be done to create a party from scratch and recruit and identify who is suitable for joining your party, when you are still formalising your manifesto. To throw that together in three or four months is a heck of a challenge.

1010 It also means that you have not been preparing for the next election by following what is going on in as much detail as you would if you had an embryonic party now, which people might not even know exists, might be doing an awful lot of planning for the next election. But preparing in far more detail than you could possibly do if you throw it together too quickly.

1015 So you have got to be prepared and I think there are two aspects to that. One is that people will learn from the experiences of what we have seen with parties to date and try and avoid making those same mistakes. We will probably be more likely to pick up or identify candidates who are likely to stand at the next election, because there are an awful lot of people who came out of the woodwork on the day of announcing that you were standing and nobody seemed to know that those candidates were thinking of standing, and they may or may not have been suitable people to go into parties.

1020 So if you really are doing it properly and you start two years in advance of the next election, you have got far more chance of getting those things right. If you get those things right, you have got more chance of having a more sustainable party, I suspect.

1025 **The Chair:** So any party that has not started already has left it too late?

1030 **Mr Piesing:** I do not think they have left it too late, I think they have just left themselves an awful lot of work to do in a short space of time. Certainly I would say – and I would never want to put anybody off forming a party – do not underestimate how much work is involved behind the scenes. I am not talking about the candidates. I am talking about the infrastructure and what needs to be in place to actually hold everything together as a party with the glue.

1035 I did not answer the question previously about whips and whatever, but you have got to decide whether you have a party whip. Do you have a party whip on all the core issues that you all believe in? Do you leave it entirely up to candidates to vote or elected Deputies to vote as they see fit on everything else or do you try and have a whip on there as well? That becomes really

difficult because you do not even know what issues are going to arise after the election. So how can you have a view pre-election on how you are going to vote? You are committing to vote for something that you do not even know is ever going to crop up.

1040 So I think having a full whip on matters which crop up on an Island of this size, which can be as diverse as anything –

Deputy Roffey: What about matters that were in your manifesto, like no more taxes, for instance?

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Mr Piesing: That becomes quite difficult when ... (**Deputy Roffey:** Okay.) No, it is a very valid point. I think when better information emerges, or people become better aware of information which either did exist or had not been identified as existing, or where the things had got worse since the election, then the ability to react and people's views on whether it is better to accept that you might have got a new view based on better information is a very valid question. Is it better to dig in and stick to what you said in your manifesto, when you know that some circumstances have changed, which you did not take into account?

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That is a very subjective view, people have got different views on that, but again, the earlier that you start the whole process, the likelihood is that people will be better prepared with the knowledge and the information that they are going to need once they get elected. It really is not a five-minute job or a three-month job, or whatever, to put a political party together that is likely to get way past the election. Yes, obviously you do not want it to last a week like one party did, or non-party, whichever way you look at it, but the fact is you are trying to build something that is going to last through at least one term and that needs good preparation.

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Ms Le Clerc: Can I just do a supplementary. Also the difficulty is that when you are elected and you get your membership elected, they will go on different Committees. So some of them will have a lot more information than actually ... it is confidential information until it is actually put into a policy paper. Does that also present difficulties for parties coming together, (**Mr Piesing:** Yes.) because they will have Members who will not be able to share information and may want to disagree from the party with the Committee that they are on?

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Mr Piesing: Absolutely. Yes. No question about that, I think.

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Ms Le Clerc: I think that is something that is difficult perhaps for the public to understand.

Mr Piesing: Yes, very much so. And whether it is just on individual Committees or being a party member when you are also on P&R is probably an exceptionally difficult thing to actually manage. It is bad enough on one of the other Committees, but I think when you are on P&R, that can be a heck of a conflict because you are party to information that you cannot even share with your fellow party members. That is really difficult.

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Mr de la Rue: It is certainly difficult, because we are almost at a standing start, but the extent to which political parties did exist for the 2020 Election, I am aware, from all of the people I spoke to, it did make the job somewhat easier of choosing those 38 candidates, because if there was some limit on one's capacity to process all 119 manifestoes, there was some coalescing around certain ideas or principles that could be identified.

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But one must bear in mind that, so far as I can ascertain, there are only a handful of jurisdictions throughout the world that are non-partisan in terms of their political system, electoral system. The largest that I have been able to find by population is Mindonesia, that has a very widespread population of a hundred thousand over many islands. Otherwise, they are very small island states in the Pacific basin and elsewhere. We are exceptional. We are unorthodox.

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1090 If we restrict our discussion to different forms, as we have been, of plurality block voting, or Island-wide being a plurality all in one block vote, then we are just discussing different forms of our unorthodoxy. We need to look outside of the Island, we need to get advice, we need to think how best we can go about this, because there are so many different forms of party systems around the world that we can look to for models.

1095 **Deputy Roffey:** One of the things that makes me nervous about parties is what Nigel just said, which is actually their existence in the last election made it easier. We have 38 Deputies. I worry you may have a party with a couple of superstar people with real presence who will go out there and because they will be very impressive, you get another nine complete duffers who just happen to have the same badge on them. Then you have got getting on for a third of the States elected in that way. Because the only way it makes it easier is if you are not examining all of the individuals, 1100 you are just saying, 'Yes, they're a tick because I support that party.' I think there is a real danger in that.

Advocate Green: Mr de la Rue, can I come to your submission that you sent in kindly; thank you. I had a couple of questions here that I will try to combine into one, because I think one of 1105 your conclusions in your paper to us was effectively that the findings of what you called the Reshaping of Government review, which I think means the committee that is looking at the Machinery of Government and how that might be affected, that should be sorted first. That should be settled first, and then the electoral system should follow on from that and not the other way round. Is that a view that you stick to? And if so, what do you think is the best electoral system, 1110 taking into account what is likely to be the system of government? I think it is fair to say that you are not a big fan of the consensus system, is that right?

Mr de la Rue: There is a lot to unpack there. I knew you would ask me this! I am greatly comforted by the approach that SMC have taken in the call for evidence and 1115 particularly in these hearings, in that you are considering both of those issues, the system of government and the electoral system, it seems, in parallel. I know there are separate committees looking at them, I appreciate that, but we have not been, over these sessions, considering the electoral system in complete isolation of the political system.

1120 Let me say that perhaps my thinking has evolved a little bit since I wrote that and I think it is very important that they match each other, that they go hand in hand, that the one fits the other. I think that is very important.

The purpose of an electoral system, according to the Electoral Knowledge Network, is to transform the expressed will of the voters into people who will represent it. The will of the voters is not being expressed either under our previous system or under Island-wide voting at the 1125 moment in proportion to what their will actually is. In order to achieve that, and by that I mean proportional representation, you need the right system of government in order to have an electoral system that will achieve the representation of the will of the people in Government.

I can see you are wondering what I mean by that. What I mean by that is something that Deputy Burford brought up on Monday and it is the issue of wasted votes. Without wanting to get 1130 too bogged down in the campaigns for proportional representation in the United Kingdom, it is known that throughout the United Kingdom, a vast percentage of votes that are cast by people are completely wasted. They amount to absolutely nothing for them at all, which is why 'swap my vote' websites are emerging and so on and so forth.

1135 In Guernsey, a number of votes are cast that do not go anywhere at all. In the Island-wide voting, if you analyse the votes that were actually cast that were cast for people who did not get elected, that represented 46.6% of the votes cast as compared with, in the UK, the wasted votes were 45.3%. But on top of that, as a point you raised, Deputy Burford, is the fact that on average, rather than casting 38 votes, the electors cast only 26 of them. If you work the numbers, meaning

that each person on average wasted 12 votes that they could have cast but did not cast, then the wasted votes at our last election were 63.6%.

Admittedly, under the previous parochial system, the wasted votes were only 35%, but the entire electorate did not have the same choice before them as to how to elect representatives to their central Government, which is why Island-wide voting was so popular. So we have to address that and the only way to address that is to have an electoral system that matches the system of Government that expresses the wishes of the voting population in the proportions in which they vote. And if we are starting with a new blank piece of paper here as to what electoral system we want, it can be achieved in Guernsey, with, for example, an open list proportional representation system.

Deputy Roffey: I think one of the problems is that we are thinking about will we have what we have always had, which is a system of independents, or will we have a fully-fledged party system where the electorate will be able to choose almost who gains a majority in the parliament, whether it be a single party or a coalition of parties through proportional representation?

The likelihood is I think for at least 10 or 20 years, you would get some parties standing, you would still get a preponderance of individuals being elected, you would not be able to, as Mrs Le Page, be able to say, 'Well, yes, here's one vision and one set of policies that hang together and are costed, but which I don't like, because it's going in the wrong direction here; here's another.' You will be able to do that, but you will not get the outcome until you have the fully-fledged party system.

I still would not want it, by the way, but one of my big things is how do you get from here to there? Again, I look to Jersey. You have had a party that has been ingrained for some time. They know they are going to be in opposition when they stand and they can put forward policies accordingly. They want to be the majority, I do not suggest they are playing games and just doing the easiest thing, but they still know that they are not going to be. So it is getting from our unusual system to a fully-fledged party political system which I think would be the most difficult period.

Advocate Green: Just following on from that, one of the options in the Referendum was Option D, which was namely four equal districts. If that had been successful in the Referendum, do you think – and I open it up to all of you – that would have been a better stepping stone for the development of political parties? Would the –?

Deputy Roffey: I was one of the few who voted for it, but it was not for that reason! It was my first choice, but yes.

Advocate Green: Dave.

Mr Piesing: I am not sure about the point about whether it would or would not have benefited political parties, because it would have depended entirely, obviously, on how many party candidates were sitting in each of those districts. But it is the option I favoured all along because it is more manageable. I lived out in the west for 20 years, and choosing six from eight became a point of, 'Well, who do I *not* want to get in out of these eight?' Rather than I am voting for six people, I am just trying to avoid the two worst ones, which is not healthy democracy. But is that any better or any worse than picking 38 from 119?

To my mind, if you have got four or five districts where you are picking eight or nine from 25, it is manageable for the electorate, because you have only got 25 that you really need to do your homework on. It is manageable for the candidates, because they have got only double what they had previously in terms of canvassing. It just seemed a more natural halfway house to going from one extreme to the other, but I just do not think you can draw any conclusion on the aspect of political parties, because you might have had all four districts having an equal number of

candidates from political parties or they may have all been concertinaed into two of those districts. So you would not get a true outcome of that question.

1195 **Deputy Roffey:** But the advantage of it to me was not party politics. It is what Nigel was saying at the beginning of trying to maximise people's feeling that how much of their Government they are choosing, against the other criterion, which is making it a manageable system of election. So we have got 38 Deputies, if it was four districts – could have been three, but four – you would have had nine. You would be able to get – St Peter Port did it for years – all of the candidates on a hustings. And I really would not underestimate how important that was. It was the only place you
1200 could see people's performance under fire and really make a judgement about what they were like. The fact that that has gone out the window, I think it has been one of the biggest losses.

The Chair: One of the criticisms we had on Monday of the hustings was that on the whole 200, maybe 300 people, if you were lucky, out of an electorate of thousands turned up –
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Deputy Roffey: Went back to the ... The first time I got in in 1982, when nobody expected me to, I did it, I am sure, largely on the performance at the hustings. It was only 200 people in the Vale Douzaine room, but the number of people who told me in the days after that, 'Oh, my aunty was in the Vale Douzaine room' or, 'My brother was at the Vale Douzaine room' it went out. To
1210 replace it with all sitting like lemons in Beau Séjour where you can actually nuance your answers, you pick up very easily the signals from people coming up and talking to you, you can only give one answer to a crowded room. You cannot actually think, 'I think that person wants to hear this and this person wants to hear that.'

So I thought that was the right balance between the two where you could, but it would have
1215 pleased nobody, because you had the extreme that wanted the parochial politics and you had the extreme that wanted, 'I want to vote for all of my Government' and therefore it was always likely to lose, I guess. But I thought it was the best option.

The Chair: Thank you.
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Mr Piesing: Or the least-worst option.

Deputy Roffey: Yes.

1225 **Advocate Green:** Mr de la Rue ... [*Inaudible*]

Mr de la Rue: Yes, thank you.

Advocate Green: You looked at the options very closely in your working –
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Mr de la Rue: We looked at the options in considerable detail, and it is interesting that we find something that we share in common between the three of us: that all three of us felt that a gradualist approach of Option D, which was four electoral districts, was the most favoured. There is a tendency in the Island, and there is a tendency in politics, towards binarism: that there is only
1235 one right way and one wrong way to do anything. Actually, the best solution often lies very near the middle in the sense of proportionality of all of the different factors that you are presented with. Deputy Roffey will know that, you serving Deputies will know that, better than anybody.

Unfortunately, when it comes to campaigning, as Deputy Roffey has just said, the options are presented in a binary way. And in fact, the campaigning of those in favour of Island-wide voting and those in favour of the *status quo* emphatically stated that those who favoured either of those
1240 two options should not use the transferable vote system – they should *abandon* their second

option. And in fact, if you analyse the results, it is very possible that a hybrid option would have succeeded if those who were prepared to exercise their second vote –

1245 **Advocate Green:** Yes, that's right.

Mr de la Rue: – instead of Island-wide voting, 'Okay, but this is the compromise I would go for' or those who were keen on maintaining the *status quo* and had that as their first option, if they exercised their second vote, a compromise may very well have got in.

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Deputy Roffey: There was a real misunderstanding of how single transferable vote referendums worked. The message that was going out from both camps at the extremes, is if you put a second or third choice, you lessen the chances of your first choice being successful – *absolute*, utter nonsense. Your second choice would only be engaged when and if your first choice had been eliminated and if it had been eliminated anyway, you are not damaging it by having a second choice. But that was the message that was going around everywhere, yes.

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Mr de la Rue: But the first choice that you saw in my submission was Option D on the basis that it would increase the proportion of the States' elected Deputies that voters could vote in from 15% to 25%. So it is trending towards being able to vote for who is going to form your central Government, at the same time as giving a period in which parties could emerge if that is what people wanted.

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Unfortunately, because we ended up with Island-wide voting, it was necessary to have parties, but there was not time for them to emerge properly and in a mature and sensible way, and at the same time, all of the practical disadvantages of Island-wide voting have been felt. Our problem, as I say again, has been, not only in the Referendum, but in a lot of the discussions that are taking place, we are considering variations of a block vote system, which does not achieve proportional representation and ignores the benefits of partisan systems all around the world, of all sorts of different types, that enable a much better outcome for people, in my opinion.

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The Chair: Thank you.

Deputy Roffey, you say that you used significantly fewer than your 38 votes, because you were unwilling to fly blind. So what do you make of the fact that over 20% of people did use all 38 votes?

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Deputy Roffey: I think it is their absolute right to do so. All I can say is that as a complete political anorak, I was unable to appraise the well over 100 candidates and actually confirm in my own mind that they were the right people to actually be elected. Therefore, I almost swung to the opposite extreme and said I am going to vote for the people I know I want to be in the States and then stop. Because I did not want to vote for a few people, 'I've got a hunch because they said a couple of nice things in their one page' and possibly that vote I gave them be the one that will outweigh the person that I really want to be in the States. So people will have different approaches, but that is how I went about it.

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The Chair: Yes. I think that is the evidence that has come forward to us from other areas as well, is that people were voting tactically, but in both tactics, to keep people out or to get people in. In other words, it possibly even cancelled itself out because –

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Deputy Roffey: Yes, I am not sure I would call mine tactical. I was just only willing to vote for people who I had looked into sufficient depth to be absolutely sure in my own mind that I thought would be good Deputies. But of course I was leaving the choice over the rest to other people by doing that. (**The Chair:** Yes.) So there is no perfect way of doing it.

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The Chair: Going to the question that we asked the previous panel – I think you might have all been here – about the number of votes, we were quite surprised to see that there was quite a majority amongst our survey respondents for reducing the number of votes that people have. What are the views of the panel on that?

Deputy Roffey: I would be completely opposed. Even though I think it is impractical to have 38 votes, if you are going to elect 38 people, you should have the right to vote for up to 38 people. If you had, say, 10 and there were eight people, because they had led us through COVID or whatever reason everybody seemed to vote for them because they were the standout stars, then the rest become a lottery for who filled the rest of the seats. So I would not reduce the number.

Mr de la Rue: You only increase the number of wasted votes. **(The Chair: Sorry?)** You only increase **(The Chair: Right.)** the number of wasted votes. **(The Chair: Okay.)** The actual representation of the wishes of the people is even further reduced. All we are doing with that is tinkering around the edges of an already faulty system.

The Chair: So you find it quite interesting that around about three quarters of people said that the number of votes they have should be reduced?

Mr de la Rue: Perhaps that reveals ... One of the great challenges of this is that the design of an electoral system, I have discovered over the weeks and months that I have been looking at this, is incredibly complex. How you achieve it is further complex. We are certainly not going to achieve it this afternoon. But what we have to appreciate is just as how the Referendum operated, the limitations on people's understanding of even how to vote and what the outcomes of them using their transferable vote would be, how very difficult it is to go to the population and get across what it is that they really need.

What Island-wide voting has achieved is that involvement in the election of 100% of the central Government. I did not for one moment mean to suggest that parochial voting meant that you were voting for people who were not interested in Island politics, but what one is interested in is to have a say in the composition of your central Government. You did not have that previously. Under Island-wide voting, there is at least that achieved: that you have a say in the composition of your central Government. **(Deputy Roffey: Yes.)** But what you do not have is all of the mechanisms and structures around it to make it possible mechanically to cast your votes in a meaningful way and that your views are represented.

Mr Piesing: It is more a reflection on too many people just believing that trying to select 38 was too big a task for them. They probably got bored at 25 and were almost, not making up names, but going through a process without feeling that they were adding ... *[Technical interference]* why people felt that it was too many votes to have to cast. But I think the task for a lot of people was just overwhelming. When you get your book this thick to plough through and how many people can be bothered to do that? Those who were seriously interested in politics will do it. An awful lot just gave up, probably. It could be as much of a reflection on that as it is on any other aspects of the whole process – just too big a task.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
I think it is Ms Le Clerc.

Ms Le Clerc: Yes, this one to Deputy Roffey. How has the lottery for the final 10 Deputy places, as you put it, affected the quality of governance in Guernsey?

1345 **Deputy Roffey:** Hard to say. I think we used to get this a little bit with St Peter Port when it had, before it was split between north and south, particularly when there was a very large number, it did become a bit of a lottery. That did not mean that the numbers that came up were bad numbers, but it did mean that it was almost accidental who filled the last few seats.

1350 I have not studied what percentage of the total votes the people who filled the last few seats this time and I am not going to attack the people who came in in those last few seats and say they are not good Deputies. But it is not really the quality of those people, it is just really whether they are a positive choice from the community or almost happenstance, opposed to the few who come underneath that is my concern there, I guess.

1355 The last person who came in was Deputy Meerveld, (**Ms Le Clerc:** Meerveld, yes.) wasn't it? I notice he took very much the argument of Nigel saying that people were not able to vote for people who were outside their district, and his main reason for wanting Island-wide voting was his mum could not vote for him. But I do not know he has got evidence his mum wanted to vote for him anyway! (*Laughter*)

1360 **Mr de la Rue:** I don't think he said it was his *main* reason!
But may I just –

Ms Le Clerc: Yes, please do, Nigel.

1365 **Mr de la Rue:** – pick up on something from that, that Deputy Roffey has spoken to there and was discussed in Monday's sessions, and that is the quality of candidates who stand. We have not – and I hope we do not run out of time to do so – covered what I perceive to be the advantages of political parties, one of which is of course to act as a vehicle for inviting people to join them, to vetting them, to deciding whether or not they are suitable candidates to represent the party.

1370 But on top of that, and something very much more important, I think, is that the formation of parties enables those who stand to specialise because they have a groupthink and they can draw on the resources and expertise of other people in the party. The comment was made on Monday, I believe by Mary Lowe, that there is a tendency for a need, and there is a need, for people to stand for election, be elected, who have some business acumen and some financial acuity. But to a certain extent that does limit the field.

1375 If a party wants to gain seats, it pays it to represent very broadly the spectrum of the population. It is demonstrably, apparently, the case that party political systems encourage the involvement of women in politics. It is demonstrably the case that minority groups are better represented through parties, because there is an incentive to ensure that those minorities are indeed represented. It enables a ... [*Technical interference*] of candidate of all sorts of different type that we are not achieving here.

1380 We have an homogeneity of style, of age, gender, perhaps background. I would like to see a very much more diverse composition of the States. But unfortunately, any person who stands as a Member of the States has to declare that either they have the answer to everything or they have access to the answer to everything. They have to be a jack of all trades and a master of quite a few. I think a party political system will address all of that enormously.

1385 When it comes, finally, to regional and parochial issues, again, it serves a party well to make sure that they have representatives regionally to the extent that regional or local parochial politics is important. So they will make sure that those candidates that they have in their suite, or on their list, will have that broad representation.

1390 **Deputy Roffey:** I could easily make sophist arguments in favour of a party political system, and it would not be entirely sophist because I think there are some very significant advantages, and some of those Nigel has outlined. I just think that in the Guernsey context there are a lot of drawbacks. One of them is that, to be honest, we have only got so much talent, haven't we? Your

38 Members are elected, you look at them, you think 10 have got both the ability and the experience to really lead big Departments, but five of them are going to be or six of them are going to be in opposition because they are not the leading party or the leading coalition of parties. I think that is a squandering of talent that we cannot afford.

Also, I know it is not inevitable and I know it is not the Scandinavian experience or maybe the Dutch experience, but parties do tend to ingrain this adversarial, unpleasant approach to politics that we are seeing enough of in Guernsey at the moment, even without party politics. So maybe that is an argument: 'What've we got to lose? Let's go for parties!' *(Laughter)* But I think it would be even harder to reverse out of that if we actually have a full-blown party system. But I am not denying some of the advantages, because there are some.

The Chair: Okay. Michelle.

Mr de la Rue: I would prefer party politics to personality politics, and we definitely have the latter at the moment.

Deputy Roffey: Yes, well ...

Ms Le Clerc: Did you want to come in on that at all, Dave?

Mr Piesing: No, I cannot disagree with that. I think the perception, whether it is accurate or not, is that it does facilitate tribalism, which may have existed with or without it, but perception is everything and that is how it is. People will resent a party because they do not like the party, but again, that is almost playing the man and not the ball.

There were people who did not vote for any candidates from parties at the last election, there were people equally who did vote for people who collectively were in a party. Where that trade-off, votes gained versus votes lost, we do not know. Nobody knows. It is impossible to know. I think there are people who are so vehemently against the concept of parties that they will probably never change their mind, but it could be because it is a halfway house, because we have not got a full-blown system. If we had a full-blown system, people who were against parties might actually be more in favour of it. But until we get there, you are in no man's land, really and very difficult to know what that outcome would be.

Deputy Roffey: I bumped into a senior States' man of earlier years the other day who has not been in the States for quite some years and he said, 'Peter, how on earth do we get back to a Government of all the talents?' because that is what he thought used to happen when he was in the States: that they just chose the best people for the leadership roles. I am not convinced. I am not saying that is totally incompatible with party politics, but I think it makes it a lot harder to do.

I do agree with Nigel that personality politics are far worse than party politics, but unfortunately it is not an either/or. You can get personality politics with parties or without and you can get rid of them with or without. But I completely agree that the biggest task at the moment is to try and get this vitriol out of local politics.

The Chair: I think just one final question from Michelle, and then we are going to have to wrap up.

Ms Le Clerc: Yes. So, Pete, you said that Island-wide voting encourages a surfeit of candidates, some who are less than committed. Can you see any way of resolving this issue; and have we got some less-than-committed candidates that have been elected this time round?

Deputy Roffey: I see, so you are asking me to ... *(Laughter)* Maybe one or two. I think there have been people who have floated through the first three quarters of this Assembly without

1450 maybe fully engaging in the workload in the way I would have expected. How can you ...? I do not think you can. One of the problems with Island-wide voting is you have to overcome the difficulty of being a candidate by facilitating it and by facilitating it you say we will organise everything for you, you are not expected to knock on the doors, you will be in this brochure, we will make a little film of you. Somebody else can be writing all your words for you. I think you have to do that under an Island-wide voting system.

1455 If you have to do that, then there is less of a barrier for people who may not be fully committed, as I said earlier, going back in full circle, just thinking, 'Let's give it a punt.'

Ms Le Clerc: And was it made –?

1460 **Deputy Roffey:** I think in the old days, those people would have been caught out. People would have got to know them better and say, actually, this person's all gas and no gaiters, or whatever. I am not sure that happens now.

1465 **Ms Le Clerc:** Was that made easier by some of the parties that had formed for the last election, because they would have had even less to do because they had the party mandate as well; the party –?

Deputy Roffey: Yes, that would have helped, but I think it is more down to the Island-wide voting system than to parties, to be fair.

1470 **Ms Le Clerc:** Okay.

The Chair: I am sure we could go on for quite some considerable time, but we are going to have to leave it there. So I would just like to say thank you very much indeed for another interesting session.

1475 Thank you.

Ms Le Clerc: Thank you.

The Committee adjourned at 4 p.m.