

Public Engagement at the Open Forum ('surgery') involving States Members

Introduction

The following summarises the suggested guidelines for the Open Forum (States Members Surgery) which replaces what was previously referred to as Part 2 of the People's Meetings.

The change clarifies that the Open Forum is a completely separate event to the People's meeting which is required by law.

The Open Forum aims to provide for structured discussion where States Members can provide feedback to members of the public. It is not however to create a platform for campaigning.

The following guidelines are very similar to the current arrangements.

It is proposed this revised arrangement is reviewed by States Members annually to assess whether it remains appropriate.

Guidelines on how it will work

The Open Forum will ordinarily be held on the same evening as the formal monthly People's Meeting.

There will be a Convenor, selected from among the States Members present, who will lead the meeting and will be supported by other States Members, and will close it when he/she considers it appropriate.

The Convenor will probably, but not necessarily, be the same person who chaired the People's meeting.

Discussion will commence based on questions which members of the public have submitted in advance to the Chief Executive's office by noon on the Friday preceding the People's Meeting.

Detailed guidance for submitting and asking questions

Questions should relate to wider States policy, operational and strategic matters. Issues relating to individual or personal issues should be dealt with directly with the States in the normal way.

To assist members of the public, the following broad guidelines are suggested:

Questions should:

- Be drafted and presented concisely to facilitate realistic responses in the available time;
- Focus on one issue per submission;
- Be clear and not vague;
- Seek information or request action;
- Not seek or offer expressions of opinion;
- Not seek expressions about interpretation of law where this is a matter for the Law Officers;

The same (or similar) question cannot be put at every meeting. This is to give a reasonable number of contributors the opportunity to ask questions.

The question can be read from the Chair or by the contributor.

If the assessment is made by the States Members that there are more questions than can be properly answered in the time available, the issues will be prioritised and this will be communicated at the meeting.

Response procedure

The response to the question will be presented in the Open Forum.

Where the question requires more research in order to provide a proper response, this will be communicated at the time.

Members of the public may follow up the responses with reasonable supplementary questions.

In order to allow meaningful dialogue on a range of topics, the Chair will restrict interventions to 2 minutes per person.

Furthermore to ensure the Open Forum can hear from a range of people, individuals who have placed questions or wish to pose supplementary questions are asked to limit themselves to a single topic.

Where an individual is making repeated contributions or talking at length, the Convenor will remind them that the spirit and intent of the Forum is for multiple members of the public to engage on a personal level with those they have elected. If an individual feels they need to talk about theirs and others views and concerns at length the Convenor will advise them to do this outside the Forum.