



## SCRUTINY NEWS RELEASE

**14 MARCH 2019 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Public consultation on proposed changes to Legal Aid**

**A Scrutiny Panel will be inviting public comments on proposed changes to Jersey Legal Aid system. The changes are set out in a draft law lodged by the Chief Minister last month. If approved, the draft law would replace Jersey’s current legal aid system, which is operated independently by the legal profession, and place it on a statutory basis under the Judicial Greffier. Changes could also be made to the eligibility criteria for legal aid.**

The draft Access to Justice (Jersey) Law was lodged by the Chief Minister on 25th February 2019. A previous version of the law was lodged and withdrawn last year. The Legal Aid Review Panel initially reviewed the proposals last year and made some suggestions that have been included in the new draft law. The Panel will now resume its work and will review the new version of the law. It will also be reviewing the current draft Legal Aid Scheme Guidelines appended to the draft law.

The draft law places Legal Aid on a statutory basis and also provides for a “Legal Aid Guidelines Committee” to draw up a new Legal Aid Scheme. The existing Legal Aid scheme will continue to operate for 6 months after the law is approved, until a new scheme is developed.

The Panel will be inviting members of the public to comment on the proposals, with a particular emphasis on the possible changes to eligibility criteria set out in the draft Legal Aid Scheme Guidelines. Further details of the public consultation will be published in due course. In the meantime, the Panel can be contacted via [scrutiny@gov.je](mailto:scrutiny@gov.je) or via the States Assembly website (<https://statesassembly.gov.je/Scrutiny/Pages/feedback.aspx>).



The Panel received a number of submissions from key stakeholders last year and will be contacting all stakeholders to see if they wish to update their evidence or provide further submissions. All evidence is published on the States Assembly website.

[Deputy Steve Ahier](#), Chairman of the Legal Aid Review Panel said “The proposals represent a significant change to the way Legal Aid operates in Jersey. Through our review, we wish to ensure that the proposals are fit for purpose and that the public is fully aware of the impact of the changes.

At the outset, we want to make it clear that there is a difference between the decision to place Legal Aid on a statutory basis, which the Assembly will be asked to vote on, and the content of the guidelines, which will be drawn up afterwards by the Guidelines Committee. Many of the changes as to how legal aid operates will be contained within the scheme guidelines.

Our review will cover both of these areas, which we hope will give reassurance to States Members and the public that the changes have been thoroughly examined and scrutinized.”

**END**

#### **Notes to Editors:**

- The Legal Aid Review Panel has been established by the Chairmen’s Committee for the purpose of reviewing the draft Access to Justice (Jersey) Law.
- Further information about the Review Panel can be found at: <https://statesassembly.gov.je/Scrutiny/Pages/ScrutinyPanel.aspx?panelId=41>.
- Terms of Reference for the review and previous submissions to the Panel’s work are published here: <https://statesassembly.gov.je/Scrutiny/Pages/Review.aspx?reviewid=298>
- The draft Access to Justice (Jersey) Law (P.23/2019) is published on the States Assembly website: <https://statesassembly.gov.je/assemblypropositions/2019/p.23-2019.pdf>

#### **About Scrutiny**

Scrutiny panels and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) work on behalf of the States Assembly (Jersey’s parliament). Parliamentary Scrutiny examines and investigates the work



of the Government, holding ministers to account for their decisions and actions. They do this by reviewing and publishing reports on a number of areas:

- Government policy
- new laws and changes to existing laws
- work and expenditure of the Government
- issues of public importance

This helps improve government policies, legislation and public services. If changes are suggested, Scrutiny helps to make sure that the changes are fit for purpose and justified.

**Review Panels** are set up with the agreement of the Chairmen's Committee to review particular proposals, issues or projects. They are made up of States members who are not Ministers or Assistant Ministers.

#### Contact

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