



The Government of Sark

POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

A COMMITTEE OF THE CHIEF PLEAS OF SARK

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Changes to the Court of the Seneschal – Public consultation

A review of the Court of the Seneschal (the “Seneschal’s Court”) was conducted by Roger Venne QC in 2016. The purpose was to get an independent expert outsiders’ view of the workings of the Court and to suggest any improvements and highlight any shortcomings.

In the years following almost all of the recommendations contained within the “Venne Report” have been, or are in the process of being, implemented.

The recommendation that has caused the most difficulty, and has taken the longest to implement, is the notion that having additional persons to sit with the Seneschal -“extending the Bench”- would help to render the Court less susceptible to challenge in this modern world.

The idea is that, by having two other members of the community sitting with the Seneschal, a more rounded appraisal can be achieved of serious litigation and family matters before the Court. It is proposed that routine matters would continue to be dealt with by the Seneschal alone.

Therefore, the proposal is that two or more persons of full age be appointed by the Appointments Committee and it is envisaged that at least one of these persons would be female.

Before implementing any changes, which would require amendment to the Reform Law, the Policy and Finance Committee and the Seneschal would welcome comments from interested members of the public.

Matters for consideration are:

- Terms of appointment – duration, remuneration, title.
- Should the appointees advise the Seneschal, having heard the evidence, leaving the ultimate decision to him or have equal voting rights?
- In general, would you support such a change?

Please address any comments to either the Policy and Finance Committee policy.finance@sarkgov.co.uk or to the Seneschal seneschal@sarkcourt.co.uk

At the end of the consultation period it is proposed to have an open meeting in the Assembly Room to hear views from interested parties and provide further explanation.

Closing Date of Consultation Period: 27th November.

The full **Venne Report** can be downloaded and viewed on the Court of the Seneschal website: www.sarkcourt.co.uk