

Wednesday 18 December 2019

## **C&AG SHARES SOME THOUGHTS ON GOVERNANCE ISSUES ACROSS THE STATES OF JERSEY**

### ***Comptroller and Auditor General issues latest report***

Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Karen McConnell, has today (18 December 2019) published a 'Thinkpiece' on governance which is designed to stimulate debate.

This Thinkpiece draws on the C&AG's previous reports to the States Assembly on corporate governance, internal control and value for money. It relies on her experiences over her seven years as C&AG, drawing together observations both from reports that she has issued and from the wider learning gained in undertaking the role.

She emphasises that good public services are underpinned by good governance – effective, transparent processes for making and implementing decisions. Good governance embraces sound processes but also ethical behaviour and a commitment to openness. Good governance does not grab headlines; but failures in governance are often at the heart of poor quality public services.

The governance arrangements within Jersey have evolved over time and are complex. In many respects they are more developed than those in other Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories.

Ultimately, accountability for the use of resources is to the States Assembly but the mechanisms by which that accountability is secured vary significantly. In some areas the differences are justified, in others they have simply evolved over time.

Karen McConnell reflects upon the improvements in governance that the States have made and that are planned. But she also highlights that good governance is not a static concept. It evolves and the best performing organisations continually strive to improve, including in their governance arrangements.

In her report the C&AG focusses on matters which are within her jurisdiction and which in her view have practical rather than purely theoretical consequences. She encourages debate in the following areas:

- conduct;
- the Constitutional framework;
- the Legislature (States Assembly);
- the interaction between the States Assembly and the Government;
- the Executive (Government);
- accountability of bodies and officers making decisions independently;

- bodies acting at arm's length;
- complaints; and
- public audit.

**Karen McConnell said:**

“In this my final report, I have drawn upon my experience over the last seven years. I recognise that this Thinkpiece is wide ranging. It is intended to stimulate debate and I have deliberately avoided making prescriptive recommendations.

“I have repeatedly addressed governance issues in the reports that I have presented to the States Assembly. Some reports, such as my reports on the *Governance of the States of Jersey Police* (March 2018) and *Governance Arrangements - Health and Social Care* (September 2018), were exclusively about governance. Others, such as my reports on *Decision making - selecting a site for the Future Hospital* (November 2017) and the *Role and Operation of the States Employment Board* (March 2019), were substantially about governance. Good governance is of increased importance during a period of unparalleled change.

“Good governance is characterised by clarity. That clarity facilitates understanding and in turn acceptance as an integral part of the way in which an organisation works. But for well-designed governance structures to be consistently operated as intended, there needs to be an unambiguous tone from all in leadership positions, including politicians and officers, that reinforces to all those in public life the importance of good governance.

“Good governance embraces a series of interconnected strands that cannot be considered in isolation. It is vital that, when making changes to one element, the impact on other elements is considered and understood. Careful thought is required at political and officer level, within the Government of Jersey, the wider States and beyond. Genuine engagement and debate is needed to determine whether, how and how fast to move forward on the matters I have identified.

“There is no obvious forum to take forward these matters. However, I think that the Public Accounts Committee would be well placed to begin the process.

“Whatever structural arrangements are adopted for consideration of the matters that I raise in this report, the quality of that debate will itself demonstrate the States' commitment to good governance.

“This is my final report as C&AG. I would like to thank everyone for the very positive way they have responded to my Office and to my reports over the last seven years.”



The report will be available on the Jersey Audit Office's website from 0930 on Wednesday 18 December 2019 at ([www.jerseyauditoffice.je](http://www.jerseyauditoffice.je)).

The report *Governance - a Thinkpiece* can be found at:  
<https://www.jerseyauditoffice.je/our-work/2019/>

## **ENDS**

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### **Notes to Editors:**

- The Office of Comptroller and Auditor General ('C&AG') was established in 2005 and operates under the Comptroller and Auditor General (Jersey) Law 2014
- The remit of the C&AG includes the audit of financial statements, corporate governance, internal control and wider consideration of public funds, often expressed as 'value for money'
- Karen McConnell was appointed in 2013 and the term of office was extended in 2014 to 31 December 2019. Following the introduction of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Jersey) Law 2014 the term of office is now fixed at seven years and is non-renewable
- Formerly of the UK Audit Commission ('the Commission'), Karen held a variety of senior positions, including leading the Audit Practice
- Lynn Pamment has been appointed as the new C&AG from 1 January 2020. Handover arrangements are in place overseen by the Board of Governance of the C&AG
- The Office of Comptroller & Auditor General is known as the 'Jersey Audit Office'
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### **Comptroller and Auditor General's Policy regarding issue of reports and contact with the media:**

- Press releases will be published by the Jersey Audit Office to accompany the publication of each report
- Embargo times, where set, will be at 0001 hours on the day of publication - for press releases, reports and all other information pertaining to the publication date
- Other press releases/statements may be made on an occasional basis and not necessarily dependent upon the publication of a report. They will be subject to the same embargoes where set
- With any report issued, the opportunity is available for members of the press to request factual clarification, by email, of points contained therein
- Any comments made additional to any reports, will be included within any press release(s) as issued by the Jersey Audit Office, in the form of a quotation by the C&AG. These comments will be available for publication; but there will not be any supplementary live or pre-recorded interviews offered or undertaken by either Karen McConnell or the employees of the Jersey Audit Office



JERSEY AUDIT OFFICE

- The C&AG is prepared, on an occasional basis, to provide articles for publication in the local media, following a specific request and consideration of the relevant topic
- All public information, including press releases and reports, are accessible on the Jersey Audit Office website at [www.jerseyauditoffice.je](http://www.jerseyauditoffice.je)

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