

6. MOTION

**Sittings of the House –  
Additional sittings in September and October –  
Amended motion carried**

The Hon Member for Middle (Mr Shimmins) to move:

*That in Session 2018-2019 the House shall sit on 11th and 25th September and 2nd and 9th October in addition to the normal sitting dates, but that the House shall not sit on 30th October and 28th May but shall sit on 11th June; and that the Standing Orders Committee shall report on provision for the dates for annual Sessions thereafter to start on the second Tuesday of September and to provide for breaks in the sittings to coincide with half-term breaks and the TT fortnight.*

**The Speaker:** Turning now to Item 6 on our Order Paper, and I call on the Hon. Member for Middle, Mr Shimmins to move.

**Mr Shimmins:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

5 Hon. Members, many of us had a debate on this subject last week and whilst there was disagreement on a number of the aspects of detail, I was heartened that many Members felt that the subject had merit. As such, I would suggest that Members consider the concept first, as we may well hear more detailed proposals in a short while.

10 I will recap the current situation and then outline the high level benefits of changing the timetable of sittings.

The Isle of Man has the longest summer recess of the parliaments in the British Isles. The three-month or 88-day gap is much bigger than Westminster, Edinburgh, Dublin, Cardiff, Jersey and Guernsey.

15 We operate pretty much to the same schedule as detailed in the 1946 House of Keys Standing Orders. During these 71 years, other parliaments have altered their timetables to reflect the changing world around them. They have not been afraid to tweak the way they operate to improve their effectiveness. They have also sought to ensure that their assemblies reflect the makeup of their society.

20 Members, this motion should not be subject to a CoMin whip, as it is a parliamentary matter. There has been some unfortunate confusion about this motion. Let me just clarify: this is *not* about electioneering, popularism or my personal holidays. It is *not* suggesting that Members do not work diligently. It is *not* about the length of sittings. I recognise that Members juggle many competing priorities.

25 This motion simply asks that we change the timetable of sittings to help us be more effective. This motion is about working smarter, rather than harder. It also seeks to align sittings better with school holidays, following the practice of neighbouring parliaments who have made great strides in diversity.

30 Members, our gender diversity metrics are poor, in relation to Scotland, Ireland, Wales and the House of Commons in Westminster. In the States of Jersey, they are very concerned that they are so far behind, on diversity, the rest of the UK and Ireland. Members, in Jersey the Chief Minister and three Deputies established a States' Assembly Diversity Forum in July this year, to take action to tackle this issue.

35 It is unfortunate that our diversity metrics are actually worse than those in Jersey and we are of course further behind the others. But what action have we taken? Members, I ask you, are you proud to maintain this status quo?

To recap, there are four main advantages in changing. Firstly, it will spread the work more evenly over the year to help smooth out the peaks and troughs of workload; and this helps enable Members to better scrutinise the papers presented.

Secondly, it will reduce delays while business waits for the return of the House over the summer. Of course we can convene in an emergency, but we could also schedule a shorter gap to cut down routine delays.

Thirdly, it will reduce the number of occasions when Bills receive multiple readings on the same day. We have had one such instance today: it was sub-optimal. There have been four Bills in the last 12 months where this has happened in the Branches.

Fourthly, by aligning more to the school holidays, we help encourage a more diverse membership, including those with childcare responsibilities.

Members, as we go onto consider this matter, I ask you: are you proud that we have the longest summer recess in the British Isles?

Members, this is an excellent House with many valued traditions. Over the years, it has evolved and at times led the way with an innovative approach. We need to regain this positive mindset, open to new ideas and thinking. This motion demonstrates a new commitment to continuous improvement.

Mr Speaker, I beg to move this motion, which will help us serve our Island more effectively.

**The Speaker:** I call on the Hon. Member for Douglas East, Miss Bettison.

**Miss Bettison:** Thank you.

I beg to second and reserve my remarks.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Members, just to advise you that I have received so far four amendments to this motion. I will get all of them on the table in the order in which they were received. That is not to say that will be the order that they will be voted on, but we will cross that bridge when we come to it.

So if I can ask in the first instance Mr Ashford to move his amendment.

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**Mr Ashford:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

As you rightly say, I do have an amendment to this:

*To leave out all words after ‘the House shall sit on’ and to add the words ‘25th September and 2nd October and 9th October in addition to the normal sitting dates and weekly sittings in future years shall commence on the final Tuesday of September thereafter; and that the House of Keys Standing Orders Committee shall investigate options for further changes to sitting dates and times to encourage diversity; and that the Standing Orders Committee of Tynwald be requested to examine the need for questions to be tabled and answered over the months of August and September; and Standing Order 1.1(2)(a) shall be amended to leave out the words “third Tuesday in October” and to insert the words “last Tuesday in September”.’*

I would like to start by thanking the Hon. Member for Middle for engaging with me over this amendment. I think personally we have come up with a very good amendment. I have spoken to several Members about this and all those Members think that it is an excellent compromise.

Although the amendment might look rather convoluted, Mr Speaker, to be honest, it is actually quite simple. What it does is it brings the House back in the final week of September, so we gain three additional sitting days, prior to October’s Tynwald.

That is in place for the forthcoming sitting, and then we write into the Standing Orders that the House shall commence on the final Tuesday of September thereafter.

I believe with those three additional sitting days, Mr Speaker, it will deliver what the Hon. Member for Middle, Mr Shimmins is after, in terms of for instance, where he spoke today about

the Bill we have just discussed – the Gambling (Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism) Bill. That Bill would not have needed to have had both the clauses and Third Reading done today. We would have had prior sittings to be able to move those separately and allow for longer consideration period.

My amendment also, Mr Speaker, does not get rid of the diversity issue, but I have always believed that diversity is about more than just firming up and focusing on the school holidays. So the amendment asks for the House of Keys Standing Orders Committee to investigate options for further changes to sitting dates and times, to encourage diversity, and crucially, Mr Speaker, it also puts in place a date for reporting. So it has asked the Committee to report by February 2018.

I think one of the other crucial things about it is rather than just asking the House to investigate, it makes clear what the Standing Orders Committee is actually investigating in relation to diversity.

Mr Speaker, the other thing that is mentioned within my motion is the question of summer Questions, which of course are Tynwald Questions, Mr Speaker, so this House quite rightly cannot dictate to another Branch. But what we are doing is asking that the Tynwald Standing Orders Committee consider whether there is a need for summer Questions. It is only a personal view, Mr Speaker, but I think if the House is getting three additional sittings, which my motion provides for, then the need for summer Questions – which I know does put a burden on Departments – is no longer there.

So I think all of the components tie in together, Mr Speaker, and I would urge all Members to support this amendment. I think it is a good compromise. It keeps the diversity that Mr Shimmins and other Members are looking for on the table. It will allow the Standing Orders Committee to consider that in a well-rounded way, and then come back to the House with proposals and options. It also allows something that I know a lot of Members have been concerned about – the impact of summer Questions to be considered. It also helps expedite business with three additional sitting days.

I do not think a massive change. I am not going to try and claim that it is re-writing the world, Mr Speaker. So hopefully it is a decent compromise for those who want some change, but not too much, and we can do this one step at a time.

I think it is the right way forward, and I would urge Members to support my amendment.

**The Speaker:** I call on the Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Callister.

**Mr Callister:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am more than happy to second the amendment my hon. colleague from Douglas North, Mr Ashford.

**The Speaker:** I call on Mr Malarkey to move his amendment.

**Mr Malarkey:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I rise initially to say, 'If it's not broken, why are we trying to fix it?', to be perfectly honest, Mr Speaker.

I think I am now on my eighth year in this Chamber. I cannot remember times when we have got over-bottled up with legislation. We have the power in this Chamber to do what we like. If we have to come back tomorrow, Mr Speaker can call us back tomorrow.

Here we are on our first sitting back, it is now 12 o'clock: on the Order Paper today we have had a First Reading, we have had a Second Reading, we have had two clauses Bills go through, we have had six Questions answered. Here we are at 12 o'clock, still in debate. So you will all be finished for your lunchtime, I am quite sure – and this is the first sitting of the year.

I really cannot see why we are trying to put in more sittings. We have that option if we want to.

130 But I am minded that some Members do believe that we should have one or two extra sittings – and I think in the other place, I did mention that the only advantage I could see was to maybe move up quickly at the beginning of the year any bottled up new legislation that had come out of the Attorney General’s office.

135 So we have had one Bill today that has obviously gone down for First Reading. I can see absolutely no reason why we should need to sit in September, and I certainly know how busy *my* officers are. This conception that we have really got the time to come back, or our officers have got time to come back in September, I think is wrong. We do actually need to get a break in sometime or other.

140 So Mr Speaker, what my amendment actually does is take ... I support a lot of what Mr Ashford has said, but I do not support coming back in September whatsoever. The only advantage I could see of having two sittings prior to Tynwald was if there was new legislation on the first Tuesday of the month you would have the First Reading; on the second Tuesday of the month, you would have the Second Reading, because it can be one week later. Then you have to wait two weeks for clauses, so we have Tynwald in between, and we could actually have done ...  
145 Today we could have been doing the clauses stage of the Credit Unions Bill. So by having sittings before Tynwald in October we could actually be doing clauses. I can see that as a slight advantage.

150 So what I am going to say to Members today is: I really do not consider that we should have to change anything. I cannot talk to any other amendments that have not been laid yet, should any others come forward. I do not see any point in going to a committee because I think that is delaying things.

What I would urge Members today is, if you are minded to support Mr Ashford’s amendment, I would say, please support mine:

*To leave out all words after ‘the House shall sit on’ and to add the words ‘2nd October and 9th October in addition to the normal sitting dates and weekly sittings in future years shall commence on the first Tuesday of October thereafter; and that the House of Keys Standing Orders Committee shall investigate options for further changes to sitting dates and times to encourage diversity; and that the Standing Orders Committee of Tynwald be requested to examine the need for questions to be tabled and answered over the months of August and September; and Standing Order 1.1(2)(a) shall be amended to leave out the words “third Tuesday in October” and to insert the words “first Tuesday in October”.’*

155 It does everything that Mr Ashford does, but it just takes one unnecessary sitting in September out of Mr Ashford’s amendment.

I will now wait and see what is said to the other amendments, Mr Speaker, and then if necessary stand and speak to them.

I have not looked for a seconder to my amendment today, so I will be happy if somebody would kindly stand up and second it, if you think it is a good move.

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**The Speaker:** That is indeed my next question: is there a seconder to that proposal?

**Mr Perkins:** I beg to second and reserve my remarks.

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**The Speaker:** Thank you, Mr Perkins.

Turning now to the third amendment received, in the name of Mr Robertshaw.

**Mr Robertshaw:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

170 Hon. Members may recall, when I took to my feet in another place last week on the matter of changing sitting dates, I was both light-hearted and serious. This morning I am deadly serious, because I have to say I am a bit spooked by this whole matter this morning.

175 We have a proliferation of amendments flying around. What I want to draw to Members' attention to, Mr Speaker, is that this Hon. House does not sit in glorious isolation. Behind it are two big machines: the machinery of Government that equates itself constantly with the work in this House; and also the Tynwald Administration Office, which does equally log itself into these processes.

180 Those two machines need the time – the downtime where we do not sit – to fulfil other important functions. Both as a Minister and now as a backbencher, I am cognisant of the work that they do, and the time that they need to do these things. It is not a question of not being here, and work not being done. These are very, very important times.

185 My amendment this morning tries to simply recognise that there is something of a spirit, a desire to look at these things, and I think that is probably right. But I think it is terribly important that we do not ignore the one law that was never passed in this Hon. House, which is the law of unintended consequences. That is probably the most important of all.

190 If I can just for a minute, as the Backbencher, touch on the Tynwald Administration Office: they actually have become smaller and smarter, and I am impressed with that. But if we start fiddling around with the system now, we could impact upon that, in terms of unintended consequences, and find our costs going up.

195 So what I am trying to do with my amendment is charge the House of Keys Standing Orders Committee with the responsibility to look at these unintended consequences and the options before us, and come back to this Hon. House in due course with their thoughts, so that if we do want to look at these things, Mr Speaker, let's look at them with the full evidence before us, rather than jumping around like this from one date to another and whatever.

195 So I think that is all I need to say, Mr Speaker. I have not sought a seconder, but I do hope that somebody would be kind enough to do so. I move:

*To leave out all the words after 'That' and to add the words 'the House of Keys Standing Orders Committee shall investigate options for changes to sitting dates.'*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Onchan, Ms Edge.

**Ms Edge:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

200 I rise to second this amendment today, and I am going to speak at the same time. I fail to see at present any benefit. There are no facts, or sound facts, which have been presented to me to make the changes being suggested. We have been advised throughout the sessions that drafting time is limited. So I would like to ask Mr Shimmins, how is he proposing to change that?

205 We have not exhausted all of our current sittings, so I still do not understand why we need to be having extra ones.

210 One of the big questions that is being asked here is to encourage diversity. How are we going to encourage diversity into this House, by making these changes? If it is relating to school holidays, I am sure a number of Members in here should have declared conflicts there. However, school holidays may change in the future, so every time these change, are we going to come back to parliament and ask for our sessions to change?

I actually think this parliament needs to realise, it is not sitting dates and times that are affecting diversity; and yes, we are the Isle of Man and we can be different.

I support this amendment to go to a committee to review and take further considerations from all Members in the House.

215 Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Turning now to the amendment in the name of Mr Moorhouse.

**Mr Moorhouse:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

220 I recognise that my amendment represents a very small change, but will allow us to meet prior to the October Tynwald, then next year we can possibly consider wider change. I move:

*To leave out all words after ‘the House shall sit on’ and to add the words ‘9th October in addition to the normal sitting dates and weekly sittings in future years shall commence on the second Tuesday of October thereafter; and Standing Order 1.1(2)(a) shall be amended to leave out the words “third Tuesday in October” and to insert the words “second Tuesday in October”.’*

**The Speaker:** Is there a seconder to Mr Moorhouse’s ... ? Mrs Corlett.

**Mrs Corlett:** I beg to second and reserve my remarks.

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**The Speaker:** I am afraid, as this is the last amendment, you are unable to reserve your remarks, so if there is anything you wish to add, you may as well add it now.

**Mrs Corlett:** No, thank you.

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**The Speaker:** Okay. The floor is open for debate, Hon. Members.  
Mr Ashford.

**Mr Ashford:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

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Just taking the amendments in turn, firstly Mr Malarkey’s: I have got to say, Mr Speaker, that was the best argument I have ever heard put up by a speaker against their own amendment, in my life – (**Mr Malarkey:** True, yes!) saying, ‘We don’t need any change, but I’ll move an amendment anyway!’

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I understand what he is trying to say, but equally my argument would be that I do not see what harm having that final sitting in September actually has. (*Interjection by Mr Malarkey*)

I think myself and Mr Malarkey both agree that there are impacts on Departments and any changes that are made ... but in particular the main impact on Departments is summer Questions.

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The sitting dates: many Members have mentioned, whilst all the amendments were being moved, about the Clerk of Tynwald’s Office and the impact. Many Members will see, I did not just present an amendment on the day, Mr Speaker; I have actually considered this prior, and I did have conversations with the Clerk of Tynwald’s Office and the indications I got was that having these additional sittings was not putting too much of an extra burden on that particular department. That is one of the reasons I brought the amendment forward as it is. If I had been told that it was going to have a huge burden on the Clerk of Tynwald’s Office for us to do it, then I would not have brought the amendment forward.

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I do not see what difference it makes, really, Mr Speaker, by saying we are not going to come back on 25th September. I think it is reasonable to have three sittings (**Mr Malarkey:** Three Bills.) prior to the sitting of Tynwald in October, and I think that is perfectly sensible, to be perfectly blunt.

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Mr Malarkey says that if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it. But again, we have seen, as the Hon. Member for Middle quoted before, Mr Speaker, in relation to the amendment Mr Malarkey has moved, that we again had four Bills in the last 12 months where they have had to be sped up and Standing Orders suspended to get them through. So that indicates that there is business available to be done, if we had the additional sittings.

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Mr Malarkey can laugh as much as he likes about that, Mr Speaker –

**Mr Malarkey:** I will do!

265 **Mr Ashford:** I am deadly serious.

In relation to Mr Moorhouse's amendment, I can see the intention there, and he says we can come back with wider change later. But his amendment does not actually do that, Mr Speaker. It does not instruct anyone to look at this any further. It simply changes the Standing Order to insert a sitting on the 9th and then say that it commences on the second Tuesday of October. So if Members support Mr Moorhouse's amendment, that is it. It is done and dusted, unless a Member brings forward another motion at a later date.

270 In relation to Mr Robertshaw's amendment, I can actually understand where Mr Robertshaw is coming from with this. We have now each other for a number of years – I hope he knows me well enough that I am not normally someone who does race the fences with change in any way, shape or form.

275 What is missing, though, I feel, from Mr Robertshaw's, from my point of view, is it asks the Standing Orders Committee to investigate options for changes to sitting dates. That is all it does. Ms Edge, in seconding the amendment, mentioned the fact about looking at diversity. Well, there is no mention of diversity in this amendment; it is purely looking at the sitting dates. That is what it is instructing the Standing Orders Committee to do.

280 Equally, there is no mention – as my motion does – about the summer Questions. I do think that everything is interlinked, Mr Speaker. I think there is no harm at all in actually agreeing the three sitting dates. I really do not think there is any harm at all in asking the Standing Orders Committee to investigate options for further change and reporting by the February, where none of the other amendments actually have a date in for report. Even Mr Malarkey's does not; it has actually removed the February 2018, so it could be very open-ended.

I think also the need to ask the Tynwald Standing Orders Committee to consider the summer Questions is a very, very important part.

So I would urge Members to support my amendment and not the others.

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**The Speaker:** I call on the Hon. Member for Ramsey, Mr Hooper.

**Mr Hooper:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

295 It seems to me that the key functioning of this House is legislative – which is driven by Departments. So simply because this House is sitting sooner does not impose any obligation on Departments to work harder or smarter or faster. It simply gives them the opportunity to bring legislation forward sooner if they have it ready and if they so choose to.

300 The key thing that both the original motion and Mr Ashford's amendment do, is it changes the presumption. At the moment the presumption is that there are no sittings in September or October unless there is a matter of public interest that is brought before the Speaker.

305 What this amendment would do is it puts the presumption that there would be a sitting, so that if there is any business to be transacted, it can be transacted. If it turns out there is no business to be transacted in any of those three sittings, Mr Speaker can simply adjourn the sitting of the House to another date. No requirement for us to come back if there is no work to be done. The amendment on the table from Mr Ashford simply allows that work to be done if it is there, if the Departments are ready for it.

So the impact, to my mind, on making these sittings available can only be positive to the Departments. I think I would urge Members to support Mr Ashford's amendment today.

Thank you.

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**The Speaker:** I call on the Hon. Member, Mr Shimmins.

**Mr Shimmins:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you to everyone who has made contributions to the debate so far.

315 Perhaps if I just pick up on a few points that have been raised, first of all I support Mr Ashford's amendment. I think it is a sensible compromise. I think it also shows that we take

320 this matter seriously and we are going to do something about it, and we are not going to ... as Mr Malarkey said, 'It's not broken, don't fix it', and he does not consider that we have to change anything, is what he said. It does kind of beg the question why bring an amendment, I have to say.

I think there is still a bit of a misunderstanding about ... This is not about the length of sittings; whether we get finished before lunch or not is not really a relevant consideration in this very important debate.

325 If I just cover a few other points that have been raised, first of all, Mr Robertshaw talks about 'this would impact on the machinery of Government', that the machines need downtime. (Mr Robertshaw: No.) A number of people in Government, in the engine room, have been very encouraging to me on the subject of bringing sittings forward, spreading them more evenly over the year. They think that is a sensible thing to do. They see that this produces an opportunity for business not to be held up, for things to be dealt with in a sensible and ordered way. I was  
330 actually really heartened, following last week, by the number of civil servants from all across Government who contacted me to say 'do not be deterred, we can embrace change, we think it is a sensible thing to do'.

In terms of some of the comments that Ms Edge made, in terms of costs going up and drafting capacity, as you would expect, just as Mr Ashford talked to the Clerk of Tynwald's Office  
335 I talked to the Attorney General's office – actually, way before I introduced the motion into the other place – and it was quite a helpful conversation because I also was concerned about drafting capacity, and the learned Attorney General was pleased to confirm that having more frequent sittings would not in any way impact on that drafting capacity. There is a finite amount of capacity and actually his view was that it would hopefully speed things up and not result in  
340 increased costs. What was slightly ironic about that conversation – it was a conversation we had in August – was that he said to me, 'I have actually just returned from the opening of the Jersey States parliament, who actually returned from their summer recess about a month and a half before the Isle of Man does.' So his view was this would not be an impact.

I hope that that answers Ms Edge's question, which is a good question and I am really  
345 pleased that she has asked it. Many of our costs are fixed, Members. If you look at this wonderful building, people are in it, we have fixed costs. Actually, altering the times and the days on which we hold the sittings does not alter that cost, particularly if the House of Keys Standing Orders Committee recognises that there may well be some merit in coming back earlier than we do at present but also looking at spreading the sittings out perhaps a wee bit more  
350 effectively over the half-term holidays. As such, there is really no incremental cost. This is about efficiency, this is about working smarter, so I would ask Members to take that on board.

In terms of Mr Moorhouse's amendment, I understand it is well intentioned. I have to say it does neither one thing nor the other, in my view. It inserts one additional sitting but, as my hon. friend Mr Ashford has already pointed out, does not really act as a catalyst for any further  
355 consideration or wider change.

In summary, I would urge Members to take a positive, progressive approach to this, and if you are not able to support the original motion please support Mr Ashford's motion, which I think is a really good move forward.

Thank you.

360 **The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Douglas East, Miss Bettison.

**Miss Bettison:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I believe this motion and the motion in another place have opened a wider much-needed  
365 discussion around sitting schedules and diversity promotion in our parliament. I welcome the keenness of my colleagues to explore ways of improving our diversity and I believe this is a welcome suggestion within Mr Ashford's amendment.

370 I believe that even if these sittings are short sittings they offer the opportunity for the legislative process to continue without additional delay, with papers able to be laid, and as Mr Hooper rightly said, if there was no business to transact there would be no need for those sittings on that occasion but the opportunity would be there if they were needed.

I would ask Hon. Members to consider whether they support examination of our sitting schedule. If so, I would ask them to support Mr Ashford's amendment to ensure scrutiny is given to this subject and appropriate changes are made.

375 Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I turn to the Hon. Member for Middle, the Chief Minister, Mr Quayle.

**The Chief Minister (Mr Quayle):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

380 Obviously it has galvanised Members and we have got, as you have rightly said, a plethora of amendments. All of them on the whole, bar one, I could support; and the one I wanted to support because it has got the most in, I cannot support because of the date.

If I can just go through them in the order that I have got them – Mr Ashford's, I really liked that one. I thought it was good to review the Question Times. I think they have been an absolute  
385 waste of time and it gives a wrong feeling. I will give you an example. I had a Question in September from the Hon. Member Mrs Caine from Garff. I was on holiday when that Question came in, so the staff, quite rightly, to be helpful, put an Answer out that I had given previously in supplementary in a previous place – to be helpful, and yet I am castigated on the front pages of the newspapers for being flippant to Mrs Caine with less than a hundred words. It is very  
390 disappointing that the Hon. Member did not check with me first that ... And then I even get a letter in the newspaper from a charity, saying how disgraceful it is that the Chief Minister does not care about homelessness – when the Chief Minister was having his first holiday in 14 months and could not answer the question, but his staff had genuinely tried to make an effort. So I think that certainly does need to be looked at.

395 Where I could disagree with the Hon. Member Mr Ashford, my good friend and colleague from Douglas North, is that I think I can accept, personally, something at the beginning of October – it makes sense to have a follow through – but in September you have an incredibly busy time for Government and I think we all have to look at the wider picture, which my ... I seem to be having a love-in with the Deputy Speaker, my good friend Mr Robertshaw – we seem  
400 to be agreeing on an awful lot at the moment! But there is a wider picture.

Staff resources we have raised, Questions, but Ministers are off Island at that time. We have got the Conservative Party Conference, the Labour Party Conference, we always have the City of London Conference in Brussels. These are really important things that we have to attend and I cannot presume that Mr Speaker is going to give my hon. colleagues and myself the right not to  
405 attend those events, but it is important that as a Government we should and I think it needs to be taken on board. I appreciate the Hon. Mr Ashford mentioned that Mr Robertshaw ... it was only one committee and it should be the Standing Orders Committee of Tynwald and he is quite right on that one, but surely a little bit of common sense could prevail in this House that if the Keys Committee do the report and if they then give their views on the Tynwald Questions, they  
410 could pass it up to the Tynwald Committee and then they could decide, a fair cop, and then come back. So, open mind.

Mr Malarkey's I could support too, and Mr Moorhouse's, but I think referring it to a committee, which takes me to Mr Robertshaw's, where we look at the wider picture, get it right ... I could support an extra one or two sittings in October for the reasons given by two  
415 Members, but let's just think it through properly. We do not need to rush in. We have these committees for the very reason that we are debating now. Let's put our concerns in to the committee, they do a report and then we debate it. Surely cart before horse maybe, with this one.

420 But it is well intentioned, I accept that, and I look forward to the vote, which will be interesting.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Mr Malarkey, Hon. Member for Douglas South.

425 **Mr Malarkey:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Firstly, thanks again to Mr Ashford, my amendment has had a bit of wording left out of it. It was supposed to be exactly the same as Mr Ashford's –

**Mr Ashford:** Except for the 2018.

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**Mr Malarkey:** Yes, except for 'report by 2018'. I have just altered my amendment and had that re-put in. It should actually have been in my amendment that it was to report.

435 The only difference that my amendment actually makes to Mr Ashford's is to not have a September sitting. Everything else in Mr Ashford's amendment I agree with. The reason I cannot accept 25th September in his is I see absolutely no point. As I expressed when I presented this, if you have a sitting on 25th September for a new Bill at First Reading, you can then have the Second Reading on 2nd October. You cannot then have the clauses until 16th October, which would be Tynwald, so you would have to leave it until the week after that and you have actually gained nothing. By leaving out 25th September, any new Bills would be submitted on  
440 2nd October, the Second Reading would be taken on 9th October and you would then need to leave it two weeks for clauses. In the meantime you have got a Tynwald sitting. I can see absolutely no advantage of having the September sitting.

445 That is why my amendment, all it did was eliminate the September sitting, but I totally agree about the Questions, I totally agree with everything else that it says and have asked the Clerk that that section in the middle about reporting back by February 2018 be added to my amendment.

I leave it in your hands, Mr Speaker.

450 **The Speaker:** Unfortunately, Mr Malarkey, it is not possible to amend an amendment once it has been moved, so I am afraid I cannot allow that. I am sure your comments will be taken on board, but I am afraid it is the original amendment that will have to stand in your name.

**Mr Malarkey:** Okay, well, as long as everybody knows – it is in *Hansard* – that I would expect the committee to report back by that date.

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**The Speaker:** As Hon. Members will have appreciated from the flurry of paper that has been going round, what I intend to do is get the latest amendment in front of you, supersede the speaking order a little bit and ask Mr Harmer to come forward and move his amendment at this point.

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**Mr Harmer:** Right, okay, thank you, Mr Speaker.

The only question I have is a slight issue with the wording of the amendment, because it does not have a date on there, which I wanted to highlight.

465 I just want to make a few points. I think the progressive nature is very important. I think it is really good that we should do that and I congratulate Mr Shimmins for doing that. I think what we need to be mindful of is that – and I suppose what concerns me is all the rushing around with amendments and things like that – we are just making it up as we go along, in a sense, to be quite frank, and we are doing everything in isolation because we can decide things here but we are not looking at LegCo. We are talking about Questions in August and September, but that is

470 the Tynwald Standing Committee. We have hurried around and asked Departments what the impact would be – they have different requests, different opinions and different thoughts.

We have got to remember two things that are very important. Number one, saying ‘not having an impact’ is not the same as saying we should do it. Just because something does not have a negative impact does not mean it actually has a positive impact, so we need to say what  
475 is the positive impact.

The second thing that worries me a little bit about the amendments – and I have absolutely no issue if we need to meet in September, October or whenever; that is absolutely fine, but what we are talking about now is adding sittings to add increased diversity. How does adding sittings increase diversity? Yes, let’s look into it, and I completely agree with the idea of diversity  
480 and we want to have more diversity, and the sittings or the time we start – should we start at half 10 on Tynwald or should we start earlier – that is absolutely fine, but to say adding more sittings adds diversity I am not following through, because the amended thing is saying let’s just add sittings first and then think about it. I am saying we should actually think about what we are trying to do.

485 In terms of the AG’s, the issue is drafting time at the end of the day, it is not the sitting. As we have noticed today, we will probably be finished at one. There is not an issue. It depends on this motion, but generally speaking we have enough time to do that, so it is not that.

The second issue is really about sometimes we have to have Second and Third Readings on the same day. The issue is not with the fact that today is a unique experience. It is often  
490 something comes up, in Moneyval or wherever, and we are having to push through legislation because it is urgent; it is not regarding the recess.

I think all of these matters need to be looked into in detail, need to be considered properly, need to be thought about and done and gone through a committee, and then we can actually have evidence-based decision-making rather than talking about let’s add that day, take away  
495 that day and let’s think about it a bit more. It just sounds as though we are making a muddle of the whole thing. I think it does need to be considered, which is why I am moving that we take it to committee, we look at it in the round, we look at it with LegCo, look at it with the Tynwald Standing Committee and come up with what would be the right answer.

With that, I beg to move:

*To leave out all the words after ‘That’ and to add the words ‘the House of Keys Standing Orders Committee shall investigate options for changes to sitting dates; and that the House of Keys Standing Orders Committee shall investigate options for further changes to sitting dates and times to encourage diversity; and that the Standing Orders Committee of Tynwald be requested to examine the need for questions to be tabled and answered over the months of August and September.’*

500 **The Speaker:** I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Cregeen.

**Mr Cregeen:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I beg to second the amendment. I note that it does not have a report by date and, quite frankly, with the Members that are on it – there is, Mr Speaker, yourself in the Keys, Mr Hooper,  
505 Mr Harmer, Mr Ashford, Mr Thomas, myself – as Members of that Committee we will be able to drive that date forward if this amendment is approved.

I can see my colleague, Mr Ashford from Douglas North, looking at it, but you can drive that and it does not actually need a Tynwald committee to refer this Item to the Committee. The Committee could look and discuss between itself how diverse it wants to go in looking at this  
510 topic.

One of the areas that Mr Harmer did say was about diversity. Diversity at school holidays does not give you greater diversity than you have got now. You are restricting the diversity of what the parliament can do, the people who may have children or commitments that have got

515 school holidays. For those people who do not have that, you are actually restricting the time that they could be saying that they want. It just seems a bit strange that we are looking at diversity.

If I can just quote something from *The Good Parliament*:

An inclusive, effective and representative parliament is about more than simply increasing the diversity of Members elected to the House. It requires their equal and effective participation therein.

So it is the Members' participation which gives you that diversity as part of the parliament.

520 Going through this, I was looking ... The House of Commons is actually looking to do away with sitting days on Fridays so it gives Members opportunities to go away and do their constituency work, because as most Hon. Members will realise, this is not just a sitting day on a Tuesday; this is many nights and many weekends that you work. I think that is one of the areas that we really must get out to the public about the diverse role that Hon. Members have in this place. It is not just answering Questions and doing the legislation part. You have got your  
525 departmental work, you have got your constituency work, so it is not nine to five, and unfortunately, as much as you try to keep that within the realms of ... If you set it into school holidays, it is much like the teachers. It does not just go from nine o'clock until 3.30. Many teachers I know were in over the summer, working, assisting students through their exams.

530 So it is that thing of perception that we discussed last week, that if people think that we are discussing that, we are looking for longer holidays, and unfortunately, saying that we want to align it to the school holidays could actually give the wrong impression that we are looking that people will take more time off. I think most Members would be lucky to get a couple of weeks off a year, never mind anything else, and I think it is probably time that we all stood up and said this is actually what we are doing.

535 So I would urge Hon. Members to support the amendment from Mr Harmer. Give it to the Committee. The Committee will do that work of actually looking at the diversity, looking at other parliaments, seeing how we work. Also, you could have the effect that ... Do you want to say to Government officers, 'Right, because parliament will be sitting on these times we are now going to restrict the times that you can take your leave so that it fits in with the parliamentary ...'? We  
540 have to look at those areas about impact as well, so I would urge Hon. Members to support the amendment by Mr Harmer.

**The Speaker:** I turn to the Hon. Member for Douglas North, Mr Peake.

545 **Mr Peake:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am glad that the debate has moved into a good area this week. I think it is about having an open mindset, not a closed mindset. I am glad to hear some positive remarks today.

550 We need to demonstrate that we are willing to change. It is great having a traditional past, hanging on to good things, but it is about change, it is about embracing change and demonstrating that. I do commend the leadership here for bringing this forward, to lead with an idea to work smarter.

I will be supporting the amendment. I think it is good that it has got a September date in it. I think that is a clear message. (**Mr Robertshaw:** Which one?) Mr Ashford's amendment – thank you very much (*Laughter*) – my colleague from North Douglas. Yes, I will be supporting that.

555 I think it has been a positive debate today and thank you very much, Mr Shimmins, for bringing it forward. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I call on the Hon. Member for Douglas South, Mrs Beecroft.

560 **Mrs Beecroft:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I too am actually very glad we are having the debate – we had it last week in Tynwald and we are having it again today – because it is about time that we all talked about these things.

Yes, you should change if there is a need to change, and certainly as far as diversity is concerned I think there are things that we could be doing that would encourage more people to stand and for this House and Tynwald to be more diverse.

Having said that, in the last administration there were only two women in the Keys so we were quite outnumbered, and then after Mrs Cannell retired I was the only one. I have to say, though, that I did not feel particularly on my own and it did not put me off, because I have always judged somebody not whether they are a man or a woman or what colour their skin is or whichever else, but how good they are at their job, what they are bringing to the table, what is the right thing.

But we are obviously not allowing more women to come forward by something that we are doing. I have talked to other women about these things and the dates of the sittings were never an issue. Nobody ever raised that with me once. The times were an issue because most women would actually like to get home and say goodnight to their children, and for it to be going on to eight, nine or ten o'clock at night is off-putting, so I welcome seeing that in Mr Harmer's amendment, that actually we should be looking at the times as well.

After I was elected the first time, I went back and I did just a very quick analysis of the numbers, and of the numbers of women standing it was actually the same percentage of those who were elected. So it was not that people will not vote for women; it is that women are not putting themselves forward.

The other big reason that was given to me during the last administration and, I believe, for the previous administration as well from what people tell me, was actually the way women were treated in the House of Keys and in Tynwald. I am very gratified to see that that has completely changed in this new House. I certainly hope it remains that way, because there does not seem to be the same shall we say 'bullying' that used to occur before. Certainly if I had not been so firm in my convictions I might have easily given in to that bullying in the previous administration. Unfortunately for those who were trying to bully me, it only made me more resolute in not allowing them to do so, so it backfired slightly. That is a diversity issue but I think that is actually the bigger thing that we should be looking at.

I welcome Mr Harmer's amendment. I could certainly support Mr Moorhouse's amendment, which I thought was a very sensible thing to do first, and actually I was going to second it but my colleague Mrs Corlett beat me to it. I have no problem with his, but that is a stop-gap for now to give us time, I would suggest, to look at all the other issues.

I think that is really all I wanted to say, apart from we have got the well-rehearsed from last week arguments about we have got the longest recess etc., and yes, we may have, but in other parliaments actually you do not have to be there. We have to be here at every sitting. We cannot choose to take a holiday another time, which other parliamentarians can.

About the officers, I doubt if it is going to make that much difference to them whether we come back the first or the second week in October or whenever, and again they can take a holiday whenever their line managers allow them to. It does not necessarily revolve around when we are sitting, because somebody else can do their work for them – they always have somebody who can fill in for them. We do not; we have got to be here.

If I could just jump back to the diversity issue, because it has been raised quite a bit today, in one of the conferences that I went to I met one of the ladies from Wales who was very much a feminist and very proud of the fact that they brought in legislation that they absolutely had to have this fixed percentage and they had more women in. I cannot remember the number of years it was running for but as soon as that time limit expired it dropped again.

I think that is the fundamental thing, that on the diversity side we need to look at what is it that women do not like about what we are doing. What can we do to engage them more, to show them actually that it is a terribly important role, that it affects their children's lives? There is nothing more important to a woman or a mother than what affects their children's lives, and it

615 does because you vote on their education and you vote on their health. But an awful lot of women go, 'Oh, politics, that's not for me,' without becoming engaged enough to find out that actually it is for them and it is so important, to them and for them and for their children, to stand and become and MHK and have your voice heard and make your points and make those for the next generation coming along. I think that is a side of things that we really do need to do better.

620 **The Speaker:** I have 10 Members left to speak at the moment.  
Hon. Member for Onchan, Ms Edge.

**Ms Edge:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

625 I just really want to come back on a couple of issues, and I will carry on on the diversity stream now that Mrs Beecroft has just finished on that. I do not believe it is about diversity; it is more about commitment, hard work and how you work in the right way for the people. It is nothing to do with diversity as to why you are in this House.

630 A number of people have commented about the extra three days. I was quite surprised to hear the comments, really, if we are going to try and be smarter. What will the people think if we are really smart and we vote through doing an extra three days but then the Speaker turns round and says 'But we're not going to sit'? Is that really smart?

I am really standing again to say that we do need to have a look at this through a committee, and Mr Harmer's amendment, where it goes to both Committees, I think would be of benefit because we can discuss in a wider remit as to what the issues are here.

635 Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Douglas North, Mr Ashford.

**Mr Ashford:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

640 Speaking to Mr Harmer's amendment, when Mr Harmer moved this, Mr Speaker, he made reference to the fact that having three extra sittings does not add to diversity and I could not agree with him more. I just find it a bit strange that Mr Harmer seemed to imply that therefore the amendment was not leading to diversity in the way his was, when the words that have been used in Mr Harmer's amendment are a carbon copy of those used in other amendments.

645 Also Mr Harmer made reference to the fact that the reason the particular Bill today went from clauses to Third Reading was because it was urgent. Well, can I suggest, Mr Speaker, one of the reasons that it was urgent is that there were no sittings prior to today's sitting to be able to put it through separately.

650 Another comment that was made was the fact that we are in danger of looking like we are making it up as we go along. Well, can I say, Mr Speaker, up until Hon. Members decided to move amendments this morning off the cuff, we were not looking like we were making it up as we were going along, but perhaps we do now.

**A Member:** Hear, hear.

655 **The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Ramsey, Mr Hooper.

**Mr Hooper:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

660 I was not going to speak again, but speaking to Mr Harmer's amendment here, after some comments, I felt that I could not contain myself. *(Laughter)*

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew talks about 'working late into the night scrutinising legislation'. Well, I can assure Hon. Members that I am one of the few in this House that will do that, based on the last 12 months of experience.

665 **Mr Cregeen:** I've done it!

**Mr Hooper:** Let me be clear, I am not implying that other Members are not. I am just letting you know that this is happening. (*Interjections*)

670 **Mr Cregeen:** You said, 'Arbory, Castletown and Malew'.

**The Speaker:** Order! Let the Hon. Member –

675 **Mr Hooper:** The Member for Arbory is the one who made the comments on the length of time he has been working, and I fully agree with those comments. That is the point I am trying to make.

680 But actually the reason that you spend so long working is because there are often multiple Items on a Paper. If you have more sittings, there will be fewer Items on each of the Papers - which means you can spend more time focusing on the Items that are down, which would make you more effective.

So the comments made there seemed a little bit unusual, to be honest.

685 Again, the other thing that I really feel like I need to comment on here is about diversity. A lot of the talk here is focusing on gender diversity, but no one is talking about any other kind whatsoever. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) I think if this does end up going to a committee, which is looking more and more likely, really I think that committee needs to focus on diversity in its wider understanding and not just on gender as a divide, but other divides as well – like age, for example, and disabilities. Other areas of diversity that actually could be more important to us, perhaps.

690 **The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Baker.

**Mr Baker:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I rise to support the amendment from Mr Harmer, and I think it is absolutely the appropriate way for us to go in this.

695 But before we start I would like to reiterate a point I that I made in Tynwald Court last week: we should not be afraid of being distinctive and of working out what is right for us. So whilst it is interesting to learn of other patterns and other approaches in other jurisdictions, what we need to do is work out what right for us in the Isle of Man, and for all Hon. Members, the workload is far wider than just what goes on in here on a Tuesday. My hon. colleague from Arbory, Castletown and Malew has already indicated constituency work, departmental work, etc.

700 So we have got to work out how we should go forward, but the approach that we should be taking to this issue, as with any other issue, is that it should be fact-based decision-making. We should understand what we are trying to achieve before we try and find the solution for it, and we need to think through the consequences of the options that we identify.

705 Those options should be obtained by looking widely, not just at the UK or other Crown Dependencies, but other jurisdictions – Scandinavia, Caribbean, wherever, other CPA members, where we can learn. But we need to understand the consequences of each of them, and the costs and the benefits.

710 Whilst I accept the Hon. Member for Middle's comments that most of our costs are fixed, a lot of them are not, as well; and even the costs that are fixed, such as people on salaries, for instance, who are paid the same amount for a full year, whenever they work, there is an opportunity cost attached to whatever they spend their time doing. So to pretend that there are costless options is fallacy and again something that I would be amazed if anybody presented to the Treasury Member in that context that he would accept.

715 So that is how we need to go about making our decisions. We should not be doing knee-jerk reactions, we should not be playing to the gallery, which appears to be some of the motivation behind some of these discussions.

**Mr Shimmins:** Not at all, no.

720

**Mr Baker:** *Appear* to be. (**A Member:** Perceptions.) As the other Member for the Treasury talked about last week –

**Mr Shimmins:** Whose gallery are we playing to?

725

**Mr Baker:** – perceptions are very important.

So turning to the Hon. Member for Peel and Glenfaba's motion, it talks to sitting dates; it also talks to sitting times, which I do not think is covered by any other amendments. (**Mr Ashford:** It is.) It talks to diversity, and it talks to the effective use of Questions over the summer. All of those are important.

730

I believe that by accepting this amendment, we have got a process that will lead to some considered outcomes. I do believe that with the make-up of the Standing Orders Committee, there will be a commitment to deal with this in a timely and inclusive manner, where the options will be properly evaluated and recommendations brought forward.

735

And we must not lose sight, Hon. Members, of the fact whatever we do, we are talking about something that is not going to have any impact until 11 months' time. So even on the earliest of the accelerated sittings which has been mentioned by the Hon. Member for Middle, we are talking about September next year, so we can afford to take our time, as long as there is genuinely a commitment, which I believe there is, to embrace this issue. Therefore I ask all Hon. Members to support the amendment from Mr Harmer.

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**The Speaker:** We turn now to the Hon. Member for Garff, Mrs Caine.

**Mrs Caine:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

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I have been enjoying the debate today, I think it has been very considered and that there are a lot of points of view coming across. But I want to say that I also feel that when change is due, actions speak louder than words. We need to show that we are prepared to embrace change while allowing greater consideration to go on through the Standing Committees. That is why I will be supporting Mr Ashford's amendment today.

750

I think, in answer to the Hon. Member for Onchan's comments about diversity, I can say that I know three working mums who were deterred from putting their names forward to stand in the election because of the length of the sitting of Tynwald and the problems for them with having no childcare and with having no support network of friends and family – I am very lucky to have a huge network of friends and family who will step up when needed. These working mums decided that they could not consider standing for another five, maybe ten years, and I think that that will be the loss to this parliament and perhaps future ones.

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So diversity, accepting it is not just about gender, it is the most obvious one that people judge this House on, considerations for family and for commitment is a huge one for working mothers, and we would probably find more would stand in the future.

760

I know from the Hon. Member for Douglas South, that the proportion of females elected is directly in proportion to the number of women who stand, so through the years increasing numbers of women have stood for election and increasing numbers have been returned to this House, been elected. That is a positive thing but in terms of continuing that and keeping the momentum, I think we do need to have positive change. Mr Shimmins' motion and the amendment from Mr Ashford give us that positive change. It means that we set a line: we say that we will do this and we will allow further consideration of other matters.

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Mr Ashford's amendment does say the times will be looked at by the Standing Committees, and that is one of the big stumbling blocks to other women that I know standing because of the length of sitting, when it is Tynwald – and we get criticised for rushing everything through and finishing in a single day, when three are set down. So perhaps one of the considerations would be that we start a bit earlier, because as the Hon. Member of the Legislative Council said in the previous sitting of Tynwald, we are not waiting for the train to bring Members in to Tynwald Court for debate. We do not need to start at half past ten; we could start earlier and we could finish ... Perhaps, radically, we could say five o'clock was the normal ending time of the working day, with the possibility of extending debate for an hour if you were mid-debate. But why is it 8 p.m. for the standard finish time and why have we twice, I think, in the last year, on the nod agreed we will carry on and we carry until 10 p.m.? That is a big stumbling block.

I agree that also the manner that women have faced in past parliaments has been an issue. I myself sat in Tynwald Court back in the early 1990s and I saw the behaviour of Members to a woman MHK, who I will not name. I saw the bullying that went on and the loud roars of appreciation and the old boys' club mentality. I saw that female MHK from the press bench, I saw her run out in tears. I thought, 'Oh, it's a bear pit!' and I was shocked. I am happy to say there has not been any of that level of bullying in this House and everybody has remarked to me that actually it is because there is a greater proportion of women, which has completely changed the whole ethos of this House, and that has to be a positive thing. Anything that can increase the diversity of gender must be a positive thing to reflect the community, in my opinion.

Now, just turning on to the Questions, if we returned earlier, there would be a strong argument to say we would not need Questions during the Tynwald recess, but for me the Questions that I put down in the recess were the matters that were really urgent, and I am shocked that the Chief Minister would say that he did not know the Answer that was going out in his name. I was a little surprised at the brevity of the Answer because after I had tabled that Question and the Question Paper was published, I had a whole range of people phone and contact and email me telling me of the huge amount of work that was going on.

But the fact is that during the summer recess parliamentary life stops, but the community life does not stop, so in the community, my inbox, my messages were being filled up with people saying, 'Do you know that there has been a huge rise in the number of people using the food bank? Do you know that there huge rise in number of homeless?' I think the BBC reported that there were 60 homeless. And then in my inbox, I was getting a lot of correspondence about holiday hunger: about children who were on free school meals who did not have enough food during the summer.

So that was my huge concern. That was why I tabled what I thought was an urgent Question in the summer recess, and actually I would say perhaps if we did come back in September, there would not be the need for the September Question Paper. Overall I would say that while on holiday, the two week break I had during the 13-week parliamentary recess, I did perhaps an hour or two of emails and correspondence every morning, and that was just to keep on top of it. Reading parliamentary papers and select committee reports for research of other matters that I want to look into in the future. So I accept it is not a break, it is not a holiday but it does mean that you can juggle your work around your family commitments and holiday commitments.

I would say overall, I think there has been a lot of positive progress. It is great to have the debate and to look at other ways that we could diversify, but I think that Mr Ashford's amendment gives us the best direction to ensure that some change happens and that other issues can be looked at by the Standing Committees.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Now, there is an opportunity, unlike in Tynwald, for each of the movers of amendments to reply to their amendment, and we will go back in reverse order for this process. So first to respond to the debate on their amendment is Mr Harmer, if you wish to sum up.

**Mr Harmer:** Thank you, you

820 I will just be very brief in response; my point was that with regard to diversity, we need to look at the whole thing in the round, and we need to look at all of the issue. Doing a snap change before you have looked at something seems the wrong way round to do something.

The other issue is that during the year, we have a number of Bills that are progressed fast and are done with more than one Reading – just going back to Mr Ashford's point. It was not just the fact that it is today; it happens throughout the year so adding those sittings *per se* does not add anything.

825 So my key point to all of this is, really, we need to look at all of the diversity issues that have come up and consider them. I am very open to change, I think change is needed, but we do things based on evidence and I think that is important.

830 So with that I will close.

**The Speaker:** Next Mr Moorhouse

**Mr Moorhouse:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

835 I still think that my suggestion has value, but I am going to support Mr Harmer's amendment.

**The Speaker:** Mr Robertshaw

**Mr Robertshaw:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

840 As somebody who has been here for a few years, I think something has happened this morning with regard to the Keys. I think it has come into itself a little bit more. I think I have been concerned that perhaps debates have not engaged, in the first year of this new House, as much as I would have liked, but I think we have heard passion and conviction across the House this morning. I am encouraged by it.

845 I will not rehearse what I have already said in my reasoning for putting my amendment forward, other than to say, it is a question of sequence I think, Mr Speaker. I am at ease with Mr Harmer's amendment. It captures perhaps what I intended to say in a little bit more detail. My amendment was in no way intended to be restrictive, that a Standing Committee of Keys is quite capable and able to look at the bigger picture and extend its remit out as far in its reach as it thinks appropriate. So I think in doing so, it should not actually limit itself necessarily just to Mr Harmer's amendment.

850 So I am comfortable with my amendment. It exercises itself in the way I intended. It is a matter for the House, Mr Speaker.

855 **The Speaker:** Just a matter of clarity: Mr Moorhouse, were you seeking in that final comment to withdraw your amendment?

**Mr Moorhouse:** Can I leave it as it is, please?

860 **The Speaker:** Of course, happy to leave it as it is.  
Next, Mr Malarkey.

**Mr Malarkey:** Thank you, Mr Speaker

865 I do not wish to withdraw mine, but I am supporting Mr Harmer's amendment, and I would urge everybody to support Mr Harmer's amendment.

All I will say, Mr Speaker, is if Mr Harmer's amendment fails, please support my amendment. It does everything that Mr Ashford's amendment does, it has everything on the can, except for the fact that it removes the unnecessary September sitting which I cannot see any reason for.

870 So I support Mr Harmer. If it fails I would urge people to support my amendment and just take that September sitting out, if that is the direction we want to go in, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Mr Ashford.

**Mr Ashford:** Very briefly, Mr Speaker.

875 Unsurprisingly, I would urge Members to support my amendment. I think my amendment  
does give a balance between getting some change in the short term. This certainly has not been  
rushed. It has been well documented, the thought process behind it. There have been  
discussions with the Clerk of Tynwald's Office. Mr Shimmins, as he said, has also spoken to the  
learned Attorney's office so it has certainly not been rushed. I think it gives the right balance  
880 between short-term change and also having longer-term consideration by both the House of  
Keys Standing Orders Committee and the Tynwald Standing Orders Committee which I think is  
quite crucial.

So I would urge Members to support my amendment.

**The Speaker:** Now finally to respond to the debate, Mr Shimmins.

885

**Mr Shimmins:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I will try and keep my remarks brief. First of all, I would like to thank for the remarks by  
Mrs Beecroft, I was very interested in her views about diversity and I think she is well placed to  
speak about that, having spent many years in the House. I did note that she agreed that Mr  
890 Ashford's amendment if passed would make actually little difference to the officers, in terms of  
their day-to-day workload. I think that is a key point because it has been raised by a number of  
people that this would damage the machine, if you like. I do not think that there is any evidence  
to that effect.

Moving along, I was also interested in the Chief Minister's views. He was concerned that the  
895 Speaker may not be able to give leave for Ministers to attend the party conferences in the  
United Kingdom. Clearly we want our key influencers to attend these conferences, so I would be  
very surprised if that situation actually occurred, because rarely if ever do we have a full House.  
We accept that there is, of course, good reason why Ministers and other Members may not be  
able to attend and may have to prioritise other meetings. I certainly would suggest to Members  
900 that our Speaker would make those judgement calls wisely, and he would not obstruct those  
visits that we clearly need to make to the other party conferences.

It is slightly ironic in some respects, because of course Westminster comes back long before  
us, does some business, then they have another recess and go off for the party conferences and  
then they come back again, before the Isle of Man returns.

905 But moving to some other comments that were made, Mr Cregeen, the Member for Arbory,  
Castletown and Malew: I was not surprised to hear him say that we need to stress to the public  
that this is not a nine to five job and that it is very busy. But I was surprised to hear the  
Education Minister question the value of diversity, I have to say.

910 **Mr Cregeen:** I was expanding diversity.

**Mr Shimmins:** But if I could move onto Mr Harmer's –

915 **Mr Cregeen:** Mr Speaker, for clarification, I was mentioning about *expanding* diversity, not  
reducing it. I think the Member was reducing it.

**The Speaker:** That is not a point of order. The Member has the floor.

**Mr Shimmins:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

920 I think we all value diversity and I would encourage people to take an open and positive view  
of these things.

925 In terms of Mr Harmer's amendment, having read through that a few times, clearly I sense  
some people are minded to vote for that. Why would I suggest that would be the wrong course  
of action, Members? I think one thing that the Isle of Man does lead many parliaments in is  
committees. We are very good at committees. We are very good at talk; we are less good at  
action. Members, I would suggest this is an opportunity for you to demonstrate that we can take  
action. We are here to make decisions. We are not here to refer decisions to committees on a  
regular basis, which seems to happen, that I have observed.

930 Just one other point on committees: we are referring to the House of Keys Standing Orders  
Committee. That is made up of six Members, four of whom are Ministers; none of them are  
women. We are also referring to the Tynwald Standing Orders Committee. That has got five  
Members: again some Ministers, but no women. Do we value diversity?

935 Members, I think I have made my point. I would encourage you to vote for Mr Ashford's  
amendment, which demonstrates a commitment to action, and also looks at the bigger picture.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Okay, Hon. Members, just to explain how I am going to go through this myriad  
of amendments, what I intend to do is go through them in the order in which they depart most  
seriously from the motion that is on the Order Paper.

940 So to that extent, Mr Robertshaw's motion is the furthest from the one that is down on the  
Order Paper and so I will put that first. Then Mr Harmer's, then Mr Moorhouse's, then  
Mr Malarkey's and then Mr Ashford's. If any of these amendments get a majority, then I will put  
that as the substantive motion because they all replace each other. So it is not a cumulative  
effect; one replaces the other. So that is how I intend to deal with it.

945 So the first amendment I will put to you is the amendment in the name of Mr Robertshaw.  
Those in favour say aye; against no. The noes have it. The noes have it.

The next motion I put to you is that in the name Mr Harmer. Those in favour, please say aye;  
those against, no. The ayes have it.

*A division was called for and electronic voting resulted as follows:*

**FOR**

Mr Baker  
Mrs Beecroft  
Mr Boot  
Mrs Corlett  
Mr Cregeen  
Ms Edge  
Mr Harmer  
Mr Malarkey  
Mr Moorhouse  
Mr Perkins  
Mr Quayle  
Mr Robertshaw  
Mr Skelly  
The Speaker  
Mr Thomas

**AGAINST**

Dr Allinson  
Mr Ashford  
Miss Bettison  
Mrs Caine  
Mr Callister  
Mr Cannan  
Mr Hooper  
Mr Peake  
Mr Shimmins

**The Speaker:** Fifteen votes for, 9 votes against. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.

950 I therefore put to you Mr Harmer's as the substantive motion. Those in favour, please say  
aye; against, no. The ayes have it.

*A division was called for and electronic voting resulted as follows:*

**FOR**

Mr Baker  
Mrs Beecroft  
Mr Boot  
Mrs Corlett  
Mr Cregeen  
Ms Edge  
Mr Harmer  
Mr Malarkey  
Mr Moorhouse  
Mr Quayle  
Mr Robertshaw  
Mr Skelly  
The Speaker  
Mr Thomas

**AGAINST**

Dr Allinson  
Mr Ashford  
Miss Bettison  
Mrs Caine  
Mr Callister  
Mr Cannan  
Mr Hooper  
Mr Peake  
Mr Perkins  
Mr Shimmins

**The Speaker:** With 14 votes for, 10 against, the motion therefore carries.