### GENERAL
Sittings of both Houses are usually held concurrently but this practice is a matter of convenience and on occasion one House will sit without the other. For instance, the Council rarely sits in May because elections for certain Council seats are held in that month, but it will often sit in June when the House is not sitting to catch up on business that may have gone through the House in the meantime.

### LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

#### DAYS AND TIMES
The Council's sitting days are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday during most sitting weeks, but it may sit on other days depending upon the pressure of business. The number of sitting weeks will vary from year to year, but is rarely more than twenty. The usual sitting times are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>2.30p.m. (Start)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>11a.m. (Start)</td>
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<td>11a.m. to 1p.m.</td>
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<td>2.30p.m. to 4p.m.</td>
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<td>4.30p.m. to 6p.m.</td>
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<td>7.30p.m. to adjournment (Time of adjournment varies from day to day according to the pressure of business.)</td>
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#### THE DAY'S PROCEEDINGS
The Council’s business is conducted in accordance with the Standing Orders, a set of rules which regulate the conduct of the Council and the behaviour of Members.

The beginning of a sitting day is announced by the ringing of the bells for three minutes, to call Members to the Chamber, after which the President enters, preceded by the Usher of the Black Rod.

The day commences with Prayers read by the President.

Petitions which Members wish to present are called on as the first item of business. This is the mechanism by which constituents put requests for action directly to the Council.

Members may then give Notice of Questions or Motions for future consideration. These will be placed on the Notice Paper and dealt with at a later time.

Answers to Questions which have been placed on the Notice Paper are presented by the Leader of the Government and, if particularly lengthy, may simply be tabled for publication in Hansard instead of being read aloud. On Wednesday and Thursday afternoons time is allocated for questions to be asked without notice.

Tabling of Papers provides the opportunity for regulations, reports and so on to be made available to Members, after which they become public documents. These are usually announced by the Clerk but committee reports are presented by the Chairperson of the committee concerned.

Messages from the House of Assembly may involve the introduction of Bills or advise the Council of motions passed by the Assembly which require the Council's consideration. These are read out by the Clerk. Bills are the major part of government business and are required to be presented at least three days before debate begins to allow Members time to assess them.

Ministerial Statements are occasionally made, usually outlining a Minister's response to a situation which has arisen in a particular portfolio area. These are presented by the Leader of the Government if the appropriate Minister is a Member of the House of Assembly.

On Thursdays limited time is set aside for Members to raise issues which they believe should be made known to all
Councillors as Matters of Special Interest. Issues which are considered to be worthy of greater attention may be debated in Private Members Time on Tuesdays.

Government Business takes precedence on Wednesdays and Thursdays, according to the Orders of the Day, which lists the matters the Council must deal with. The order of procedure is determined by the Leader of the Government and may vary from the printed list according to urgency, the availability of advisers to assist Members or other issues.

At the end of each sitting day the Leader or his/her representative moves ‘That the Council do now adjourn’, which brings the major part of the day’s business to an end. Members may use this opportunity to bring to the attention of the Council any issue they wish to raise which has not been possible earlier in the day. This is the Adjournment Debate.

The President is then escorted from the Chamber, and the ringing of the bells announces the end of the Council’s sitting day.

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**DAYS AND TIMES**

The House normally sits on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at the following times:
- 10am to 1pm
- 2.30pm to 6pm

The adjournment debate begins at 6pm and may continue for an hour, so the actual end of the sitting is often closer to 7pm.

**THE DAY’S PROCEEDINGS**

The business of the House is conducted in accordance with the Standing Orders, a set of rules which regulate the conduct of the House and the behaviour of Members. The opening procedure is similar to that in the Council, but after the presentation of Petitions and Notices of Motion the House begins the one-hour Question Time, during which Ministers may be asked about their portfolio areas and the issues of the day.

Question Time is for many people the most significant feature of the day’s proceedings. Because of the direct question-and-answer nature it is usually the most lively stage and is the time when Ministers dealing with sensitive issues may reveal how these situations are to be handled. It also gives opposition Members the chance to show how well informed they are on their shadow responsibilities.

Tabling of Papers and introduction of Bills takes place after Question Time, and is followed by a period when Members raise major issues for debate as Matters of Public Importance. This is a chance for a deeper debate on an issue as Question Time may provide simple, basic answers to questions, whereas this procedure allows for discussion of policy, background to issues, and alternative approaches. These and all other debates in the Assembly have time limits which are enforced by the Speaker.

During the day Members may move around, and in and out of, the Chamber but are required to be in their places when votes are taken or when the Speaker is addressing the House.

**BELLS**

As previously mentioned, bells will be rung during the day to advise Members of what is happening. These bells are positioned throughout Parliament House and the Members’ offices, and different coloured lights and tones will indicate which House is involved. Green lights and the lower tone indicate the House of Assembly, red and the higher tone indicate the Legislative Council.

- At the beginning of the sitting day the bells will ring for three minutes to summon Members to the Chamber.
- If a quorum is called because there are insufficient Members in the Chamber to continue the debate, the bells may ring until the required numbers are present.
- If a division is called because the result of a vote is unclear, the bells will ring for two minutes. At the end of this time the doors of the Chamber will be locked until the count has been taken.
- If the sitting has been suspended for any reason—for example to allow a Member to prepare an amendment or for Council Members to receive a briefing from advisers—the bells will ring to summon them back to the Chamber.
- At the end of the sitting day, four bells will ring to announce the adjournment of the Council; three bells will ring to announce the adjournment of the House of Assembly.