

**THE STATES OF DELIBERATION**  
**of the**  
**ISLAND OF GUERNSEY**

**12<sup>th</sup> December, 2018**

**Proposition No. P.2018/136**

**POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**REFORM OF THE MARRIAGE LAW**

**AMENDMENT**

Proposed by: Deputy E A Yerby  
Seconded by: Deputy H J R Soulsby

In Proposition 1, after the words "to reform the marriage law", to insert the following:

"subject to the deletion of the proposal numbered 20) in paragraph 6.1 and the substitution of the following:

20) **The wording of the vows**, in the case of a religious ceremony, must be in accordance with the form of marriage ceremony recognised by that religion or belief; and, in the case of a non-religious ceremony, may be in any form agreed between the parties to be married and their celebrant, provided that it includes both:

- i) a declaration by the parties, in the presence of each other, the celebrant, and at least two witnesses, that they accept each other in marriage; and
- ii) thereafter, a declaration by the celebrant that the parties are then married;

on the basis that it should be the signing of the marriage certificate by the parties to the marriage, in the presence of the celebrant and of at least two witnesses, rather than the words of the vows, which effectively forms the marriage contract."

**Explanatory Note**

This amendment is in the spirit of the policy letter, which seeks to give couples more

choice and freedom in respect of one of the most important days of their lives.

It removes the requirement for a single form of words to be used in all marriage ceremonies. The original Proposal 20 recognised that Anglican ceremonies have their own form of words for marriages, and respected that. This amendment equally recognises the particular requirements of Anglican marriage ceremonies, but it additionally extends the same respect to all religious ceremonies conducted by a celebrant of the relevant religion or belief. This is consistent with the States' commitment to equality and inclusion.

For non-religious ceremonies, this amendment gives couples more freedom to write their own vows in a way which reflects their relationship and the commitment they're making to each other. Instead of prescribing specific wording, the amendment sets out the intention of the vows, leaving it up to the couple and the authorised celebrant to agree their own words for those vows.

The amendment draws inspiration from the Scottish approach. For reference, the relevant law is the Marriage (Scotland) Law, 1977, which is available online at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1977/15/contents>. The relevant sections are s14, followed by s8(1) & 8(1B), and 9(3) & 9(3A). There is a short, accessible summary at: <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/registration/getting-married-in-scotland/marriage-ceremonies-in-scotland>.

The public consultation did not include a question about marriage vows. However, the consultation responses in general were clearly in favour of increasing opportunities for couples to get married at a location and in a way that reflects their preferences, and increasing the scope for couples to shape their own wedding vows is clearly consistent with this.