

## **Minutes of the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2014 @ 09.00am in the Council Chamber.**

<b>Present:</b>	Hon. Wilson Duncan	-	Chairman
	Hon. Gavin Ellick	-	Deputy Chairman
	Hon. Cyril George	-	Member
	Hon. Dr. Corinda Essex	-	Member
	Mr Derek Henry	-	Deputy Director, ENRD
	Mr Nicky Lawrence	-	Secretary
<b>Invited:</b>	Mr Andy Crowe	-	Housing Executive – Item 17.1
	Mr Colin Owen	-	Financial Secretary – Item 17.1
	Miss Lucy Cranfield	-	Finance Manager – Item 17.2
	Mr Ben Hathway	-	Roads Manager – Item 17.3
<b>Apologies:</b>	Hon. Christine Scipio-O'Dean	-	Attending Conference overseas
	Mr Trevor Graham	-	Attending Conference overseas

The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.

### **Closed Agenda.**

There was one item on the closed Agenda.

#### **17.1 Creating a Dedicated Housing Organisation.**

The Housing Executive (HE) told members that his remit was to create a community based housing organisation, develop exemplar homes and reduce the number of empty homes and this report being presented to members is the culmination of the work to set up a dedicated housing service.

HE told members that in 30 years in the housing profession that this was the poorest service he had encountered. Homes had been neglected for decades, tenancy conditions were not enforced, rent arrears were exceptionally high and tenant consultation and choice were virtually absent.

HE said things have improved since, with the Building Surveyor's house conditions survey being completed last year and now a backlog and planned maintenance programme has been initiated. A Housing Management Officer (HMO) has been appointed, who this week has obtained the level 4 qualification from the Chartered Institute of Housing. The HMO has taken on the responsibility of letting the homes which was originally done by Social Services. A modern allocation policy and a new set of tenancy conditions have been set up. The HMO is completing a 100% survey of tenants to ascertain for the first time their levels of satisfaction and the makeup of each household. This will provide a benchmark to measure future progress. There is also a complete set of policies to guide the service in the future.

HE said that he report is based upon a significant amount of research and work. The Building Surveyor's work has provided a basis for a 30 year business plan. There needs to be a sound financial basis for a housing service. An Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) with SHG retaining ownership, and tenants and other experts involved in running it is the preferred option, at least for the next 5 – 10 years, by which time it should be on a sound footing.

HE told members the next challenge was to identify where the money should come from. Some proposed solutions are a significant phased in rent increase, reform to the system of housing benefit in order to encourage tenants on low pay, efficiency savings within the maintenance programme, a dowry of land by SHG and a long term commitment by both SHG and DFID to fund the difference. Another solution proposed was for a modest second homes tax but HE understood that Committee could not make recommendations on this matter. The Financial Secretary (FS) indicated that a Tax Group has been set to look at taxation across the board.

HE said he had met with Councillors individually and was pleased with the overall positive response, although some reassurances were wanted that the proposals were fair and workable.

On the subject of funding a member queried reliability of data. HE advised that the data was as accurate as possible but would change over time especially as efficiencies were introduced. Committee was advised that all data would be verified before any decision to divest.

Members sought reassurance over impact of rents and benefits. HE advised that this would be subject to detailed 'tenant by tenant' scrutiny and members would be given further opportunities to assess detail before a new funding regime would be introduced.

Members agreed to support the principles outlined in the report including a presentation to DFID/BAM.

**Action: Housing Executive**

#### **Open Agenda.**

### **17.2**

#### **Budget Report for 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter FY2014/2015.**

The Finance Manager (FM) took members through the Budget for the second quarter of Financial Year 2014/2015 and gave explanations for various over spends and under spends incurred within each Division of the Environment and Natural Resources Directorate.

A breakdown of how each Division spent the monies allocated to them was explained to members and FM gave explanations for monies not yet spent.



The Finance Manager then explained to members the revenue collected and the sources of collection. There were a few queries from members to which the FM responded.

Members thanked the FM for the detailed and informative report.

### **17.3**

#### **Community and District Roads.**

The Roads Manager presented a revised criteria for receiving funding for assistance with District and Community Roads. Applicants who are seeking funding to repair or upgrade their roads will have to meet the criteria as specified on the new prescribed form. Their application will then be assessed on a points system in accordance with this criteria. The revised funding was approved, on the condition that senior citizens were given a scoring, in addition to disabled persons.

Members stressed that the backlog of applications should firstly be addressed before any further applications are considered.

**Action: Roads Manager**

### **17.4**

#### **Matters arising from meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014.**

##### **Update on Rupert's Development.**

A member told Committee that the Head of Planning and Development Control had not yet had any discussions with the Chamber of Commerce or the Fisherman's Association who had objected to certain elements of the Rupert's Development Plan. The Deputy Director offered to follow the matter up.

**Action: Deputy Director**

##### **Rockfall protection recommendations.**

This is being followed up by the Roads Manager and his team.

**Action: Roads Manager**

##### **Barracks Square.**

The Roads Manager told Committee that Barracks Square will be swept and he will look at the possibility of re-instating double yellow lines. It is evident that the car park is being abused by people 'storing' unlicensed vehicles and also a number of commercial vehicles are occupying parks. The Police Directorate is working to have these vehicles removed. It was noted that Barracks Square car park is a public one designated by legislation

A member said that there will be a meeting with the Ag. Attorney General soon to look at all parking arrangements within Jamestown. Information has been obtained and copied to the Director of ENRD and the Chief of Police

regarding residential parking elsewhere which could possibly be adopted in St Helena.

Many suggestions were made to resolve the problem such as Pay & Park, improved signage and Public Transport but there must be enabling legislation to support this. The Roads Manager suggested having a set criteria for parking on St Helena.

It is anticipated that these issues will be addressed as part of the Jamestown Development Plan.

**Action: Roads Manager**

**Street lighting.**

The Roads Manager told committee he is liaising with Connect St Helena Ltd to ascertain which street lights are in working order and to identify those that are not. The Police Representative offered assistance in the matter as Officers on the beat can make a record of lights that are not in working order.

The Chairman asked the Roads Manager to work in conjunction with the Police when addressing this issue.

**Action: Roads Manager**

**Solar lights.**

The Deputy Director told members that the issue with solar lights is in progress with negotiations taking place in Johannesburg between our representative and the Manufacturer. He said that progress is slow but so far feedback from the representative is promising.

**Bill from Connect St. Helena Ltd.**

A member had brought this matter to Committee at the last meeting which the Director of ENRD had offered to investigate. However, the Director is off island for this meeting, therefore an update could not be given.

**Land Development Control Policy and Land Disposal Policy**

The Chairman informed Committee that a Sub-Committee headed by Dr Corinda Essex had been formed to review the Land Development Control Policy and the Land Disposal Policy.

**Longwood Dairy Complex.**

The Chairman has emailed members concerning the matter.



### **Castle Gardens.**

A member told Committee that the tenants of Castle Gardens (Anne's Place) were unhappy with some work that had been carried out by Connect St Helena Ltd in the past as the area is still a safety hazard.

17.5

### **Any other urgent business.**

### **Noise abatement in Jamestown.**

A member told Committee that a complaint had been received from residents concerning excessive noise in Jamestown and asked if there is legislation in place concerning this. The Deputy Director undertook to look into the matter.

**Action: Deputy Director**

### **Parking in Jamestown.**

A member expressed concern about the proposed hotel development in Jamestown and also the restaurant under construction in the Back Way which will inevitably cause traffic congestion. Residents of this area park their vehicles in the Back Way, whilst visitors, shoppers and the general public also park along this road, sometimes in the vicinity of the Fuel Station causing obstruction to other road users. This results in the Police being called to trace owners and have them remove their vehicles.

A member expressed concern about the number of commercial vehicles occupying parks in Jamestown and stressed that a plan should be in place for the parking of these vehicles.

The Police Representative highlighted other areas of concern such as the Grand Parade and most areas on the Bridge which pose a threat to the public when commercial vehicles are being unloaded.

### **Disabled parking.**

The Chairman told members he had received a letter from a disabled person, who holds a disabled parking permit, requesting double yellow lines or a 'keep clear' sign along the access of the disabled car park at the rear of the Canister. This is due to on a number of occasions other inconsiderate drivers have abandoned their vehicles denying access to the park.

The Police Representative told members that it is known to them that the disabled park is being abused during the day and also after hours. The Highway Authority was asked for their support in resolving the matter.

**Action: Chairman**

### **Market Day.**

The Chairman passed around an email from a member of Enterprise St Helena (ESH) requesting the use of spaces in front of the old PWD store and along the car park to set up stalls for Market Day on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2014. This is to encourage as many stall holders as possible.

Members took into account that a cruise ship will be in port on the same day and felt reluctant to release the car parks in question, but alternatively could offer the parks adjacent to St James' Church, Castle Gardens or on the Seafront adjacent to the Cenotaph. The applicant will be informed of this alternative option.

**Action: Secretary**

### **Footpath on Longwood Avenue.**

A member of Longwood had in July this year written to the Chairman asking that consideration be given for the un-used flower beds on the left side of Longwood Avenue leading to Longwood House be filled with suitable material to create a safe footpath for pedestrians to prevent a re-occurrence of an accident in the area.

The Roads Manager had visited and assessed the sites suitability for a footpath. This was then added to his programme of works to be carried out when funding and time allowed. This information was communicated to the applicant who has since asked that the matter be given priority for the safety of schoolchildren getting off buses and the public in general.

The Chairman asked members if funding could be found to undertake this work as a matter of urgency which the Roads Manager estimated to cost in the region of £15 - £20,000.

The matter was discussed at length with valuable input from the Police Representative taking into consideration the volume of traffic on Longwood Avenue and also the excessive speeds many travel. The Roads Manager gave assurance that he will revisit the area and see what improvements can be made to make the area safer.

**Action: Roads Manager**

### **Traffic lines in Napoleon Street.**

The Police Representative told members that in the past few months the Police Directorate has dealt with a number of issues concerning parking in the area of Napoleon Street which are causing animosity among neighbours, visitors and operators of commercial businesses in the area. This also resulted in a senior citizen being issued a formal police caution. Residents have been asked to co-operate by removing vehicles that are causing obstruction and have respect for residents parking until alternative arrangements can be made.



The Police have also been called to Napoleon Street on occasions to have vehicles removed to allow the fuel bowsers to enter Jamestown. The Roads Manager suggested that the operators at the Bulk Fuel Installation (BFI) should inform the Police of the time the bowsers are likely to be entering Jamestown so that the roads can be kept clear.

The Police Rep. requested that the traffic lines be re-instated in Napoleon Street to redefine parking areas which should help alleviate the problem.

**Action: Roads Manager**

**Traffic lines from Levelwood to St Matthew's Church.**

The Police Rep. said that traffic lines on the road from Levelwood to St Matthew's Church urgently need repainting especially in the vicinity of the Church. This area can become very congested especially when there is a funeral taking place. The Roads Manager was asked to place this matter on his programme of works.

**Action: Roads Manager**

**Piccolo Hill.**

The Police Rep. informed the Committee as a matter of information that complaints had been received from motorists that their vision is obstructed by an overgrown hedge on private property in the vicinity of Piccolo Hill. The Police will work with the owner to resolve the issue.

**Action: Police Representative**


**Car parks outside swimming pool.**

Members were informed by the Police Rep. that senior citizens have complained that cars are being parked directly in front of the chair outside of the swimming pool which is blocking their view. The problem is that the traffic lines have been worn away and can no longer be seen by motorists. The Committee was requested to have these lines re-instated as soon as possible. A member suggested that traffic lines island wide should be reviewed.

**Action: Roads Manager**

**17.6 Confirmation of date for next meeting – 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2014.**

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 11.45am.

Confirmed..........Date.....11/11/2014.....