

Minutes of the 25th Meeting of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee held on 27th May 2015 @ 09.45am in the Council Chamber.

Present:	Hon. Gavin Ellick	-	Acting Chairman
	Hon. Cyril George	-	Member
	Hon. Dr. Corinda Essex	-	Member
	Hon. Christine Scipio-O'Dean	-	Member
	Mr Trevor Graham	-	Director of ENRD
	Mr Derek Henry	-	Deputy Director
	Mr Nicky Lawrence	-	Secretary
Invited:	Miss Lucy Cranfield	-	Finance Manager – Item 3
	Mr Ben Sansom	-	Head of EMD – Item 5
	Mrs Vanessa Thomas-Williams	-	Nurseries Officer – Item 5
	Mr Ben Hathway	-	Roads Manager – Items 7,8,9
	Constable Jonathon Clark	-	Police Representative – Items 7,8,9
Apologies:	Hon. Wilson Duncan	-	Overseas Conference

The Acting Chairman welcomed everyone present and opened the meeting.

Open Agenda.

25.1 Matters arising from minutes of 16th April, 2015.

Tracked Vehicles.

The Roads Manager told members he had met with the Inspector of Police and most of the owners of dumpers and tracked vehicles. This was to discuss with them their obligations when moving tracked vehicles on the highways. Dumpers were only to be used when a truck could not access the site.

He reported that the owners had agreed to inform the Police and Roads Section of the dates and times they planned to move tracked vehicles and advise of the intended routes. It is preferred that the vehicles are moved early in the morning when the roads are cool and less susceptible to damage. They were also made to understand that they could be held liable for repairs for any damage that may be caused.

The Inspector of Police is taking the lead on enforcing these conditions.

Action: Inspector of Police

Duke of Edinburgh Playground.

The Roads Manager told members that the Duke of Edinburgh Playground is being surveyed with a view to converting it to a car park. However, further information will be brought to the next meeting of the ENRC.

Action: Roads Manager

25.2 Draft Asset Disposal Policy.

This item was discussed in a closed session.

25.3 Report on end of year 2014/2015 Accounts.

The Director and Finance Manager took members through a report on the Financial Performance for Quarter 4 of 2014-2015. Members expressed their disappointment at the amount of underspend reported. They felt much of this money could have been redirected elsewhere such as funding for community and district roads. .

Reasons given for these underspends included delays in procurement of goods and or savings being made through vacancies not being filled.

A member opined that the Directorate was too large by bringing to many 'strands' together which the member believed made it difficult to manage finances effectively. The member felt there could be something fundamentally wrong with the structure of the Directorate.

The Director said he will be carrying out an in-depth assessment of the finances to understand why at the end of year there were underspends which had not been detected prior to the end of the year.

Action: Director

25.3 Progress Report ENRD Strategic Plan 2014-15.

The Deputy Director introduced the report to members and started explaining the end of the year progress for each of the objectives in turn.

On the first objective of implementing key actions proposed in the National Agricultural Policy and Agriculture Plan the Deputy Chairman raised the issue of availability of arable land and water which the Director responded to by referring to previous studies carried out on the Peaks regarding increasing endemic coverage for water retention or to build new storage. There would need to be a cost analysis to determine which would be most effective. He said there are lots of issues to be looked at with a strategic view of the usage of water.

A member asked that this item be deferred for a special meeting of the ENRC, with the relevant Heads of Divisions, due to insufficient time to study the document. It was agreed for the meeting to take place on the 8th June with a venue to be decided.

Action: Secretary

25.5

Plant Propagation Policy.

The Head of Environmental Management Division (EMD) and the Nurseries Officer (NO) presented a draft Policy for the Collection, Propagation and Distribution of Endemic and Native plants. This will enable private sector nurseries to collect, propagate and sell endemic and native protected species of plants under license.

The Endangered Species Protection Ordinance 2003 forbids the taking, damaging or killing specified species but does not address propagation, seed collection or sale of endemic and native plants.

This Policy provides for a licensing system which will allow management of seed collection, plant propagation and distribution of endemic and native plants on St Helena. It will also set parameters within which these activities can take place. It ensures that human intervention enhances rather than threatens the existence of endemic and native plant species and enables commercial and non-commercial growing of these species.

Members agreed to one amendment which is:-

- No plant seed, spore or vegetative material can be exported other than *for scientific/research purposes under licence from the Chief Environmental Officer.*

Committee agreed to the Policy and asked for it to be circulated via email with tracked changes for endorsement before going to Executive Council.

A member asked when will the draft Environmental Protection Ordinance (EPO) be brought to Committee. The Director replied that it was probable that a special meeting of the ENRC could be arranged for July 2015 to examine the draft EPO.

Action: Head of EMD

25.6

Directors Update.

The Director gave members an update on the progress of the review of the Road Traffic Ordinance (RTO).

He told members that an Expression of Interest had been received in connection with Rockfall assessment.

The Head of Property handed in her Notice and the Directorate is now advertising for a replacement officer under the Technical Co-operation Programme.

The Head of EMD will be leaving in August 2015 upon completion of contract.

The Director told members that he will be leaving on the next weekend for a conference concerning Renewable Energy in Brussels. Chairman Duncan will also be in attendance at this conference.

He also informed members that Dick Beales is on island for LEMP/Airport related business which is sponsored by DFID.

25.7

Jamestown Parking Review.

The Roads Manager said he, a Councillor and the Head of Accounting Services had met to provide a cost analysis of the parking proposal. They also discussed the issue of residential parking. Technical Services is currently undertaking a survey of Jamestown to ascertain the number of parks that will be available. When this is done he will have to decide how many parks will be for residential use, paid parking and free parking. Another meeting will be held with the group again soon.

The Director said that it would be a good idea to take the matter to a higher level with Finance and the Police for their input before bringing it back to the next ENRC Meeting for final decision.

He asked members how they felt a public consultation should take place. It was suggested to have at least one public meeting, publicise a summary via radio and newspapers and then invite feedback from the public.

The Roads Manager spoke of the need to procure ticket machines and all the other necessary items ahead of the actual implementation of any new parking arrangements.

Action: Roads Manager

25.8

Request for traffic calming at Red Hill.

Residents of Red Hill, St. Paul's had written to a Committee member requesting assistance to make the highway adjacent to their home more secure by extending the wall, installing speed bumps and safety rails. This request was made following a serious road traffic accident whereby a vehicle had left the road and came to rest on their property.

Members felt that erecting safety rails and taking other measures would not solve the issue at hand. They agreed that the area in question is a 'blackspot' for accidents but there is a need for driver awareness and responsibility.

The Roads Manager said that there may be a low cost solution and he will endeavour to explore this.

It was agreed that the Roads Manager and a Police Representative will make an assessment and submit any proposals they may have via email to Committee members.

The Roads Manager will also undertake a risk assessment and forward his recommendations and costing to Committee.

Action: Roads Manager

25.9 Removal of vegetation overhanging the Highway.

The Roads Manager told members that during routine inspections he has encountered vegetation overhanging the highways from private properties. He is now asking Committee for delegated powers to serve householders and landowners a Highways Ordinance notice to clear vegetation obstructing the highway. In accordance with the current Highways Ordinance a member of Committee must sign the notice. The Roads Manager feels that this is an operational issue and should be dealt with by the Roads Section.

There was confusion with the words 'public road' and 'highway', therefore delegated powers were not agreed.

Members felt this was an issue that should be revisited by the Attorney General's Chambers.

Action: Roads Manager

25.10 Any other urgent business.

Building Regulations.

Members were told that this matter is work in progress being undertaken by the Head of Planning and Building.

Castle Gardens.

Members were informed that a contract for a worker in Castle Gardens had been advertised and responses received. The procurement process had been followed for this work.

ENRC Terms of Reference.

The Chairperson will raise this matter in Executive Council.

Action: Chairman

St Helena Yacht Club.

The Director told members that properties on the Seafront have been operating without formal agreements or leases. The aim is for these buildings to be in active use and tenants paying realistic rents. It is recommended that SHG lease these buildings with relevant terms and conditions in place.

The building occupied by the St Helena Yacht Club (SHYC) has attracted interest from other investors without being advertised for lease. The decision has been made to terminate their current lease agreement and advertise the property for lease. The SHYC will be able to submit a proposal along with other interested parties.

The Sea Rescue Service (SRS) building at Rupert's has been delayed, therefore the SRS is in need of a building for storage and staff training until they can move to their new facility. It has been agreed that the SRS utilise the building currently occupied by SHYC for three months and also accommodate the SHYC during this period. This will allow them to continue their activities to build up funds with a view to submitting a proposal for the longer term lease of the building.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 13.25pm.

Date for the next meeting is scheduled for the 18th June 2015 at 09.45am in the Council Chamber.

Confirmed..........Date.....10th June 2015