

EXCO REPORT - TUESDAY 31 MAY 2016

The meeting today was held in the Governor's Office while the Council Chamber is undergoing some much needed refurbishment. The Governor welcomed Members and in particular Councillor Gavin Ellick who was standing in for Pamela Ward Pearce and Councillor Mike Olsson who was standing in for Lawson Henry.

The first item on the Open Agenda was the extension of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Governor expressed the view that this treaty, which had been ratified by the UK a number of years ago, was an important tool in protecting the rights of women. All Members agreed that the Convention should be extended to St Helena.

The Attorney General then introduced a Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning closer co-operation between the Governments of British Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and the UK Government - to facilitate the joint sharing of information for the purposes of more effective safeguarding of children. The AG explained that this document had been proposed by the Falkland Islands Government at a recent Attorney Generals' conference and had also been raised at the Joint Ministerial Conference in the UK in late 2015. This MOU encourages all signatories to exchange information and learning from their operations. It was acknowledged that recent experience in St Helena was valuable to other Territories and that we could all learn from each other. It was also acknowledged that there was a great deal of information sharing already happening. Council agreed that St Helena should sign this MOU.

The Financial Secretary then introduced a request from Saint FM for financial assistance. Members had approved a similar request in July 2015 and in anticipation of the media review report - which is expected shortly - agreed to extend further requested funding to Saint FM for this financial year to the value of £15,000. Members recognised the value of Saint FM to the community of St Helena.

ExCo then agreed to adjourn the consideration of Social Security Regulations and the Road Traffic Regulations papers, as more work was needed on both these issues.

The final item on the Open Agenda was the St Helena Capital Programme Performance Improvement Plan. Members acknowledged the relatively poor performance of the capital programme over recent years and welcomed the plan to improve this. It was noted that the plan was in two parts - governance & assurance and project delivery.

Members were also eager to reassure the public that work is continuing on some of the larger projects in the programme such as the Prison at Sundale, the new Fire Station at Alarm Forest, the water storage projects at Harpers Hill and Hutt's Gate, sewerage for Half Tree Hollow and Jamestown, Phase 1 of the Rupert's Development Project, Rockfall Mitigation work and the R2 project for Side Path and Field Road.

All of these projects now have firm timescales and all delivery partners are committed to meeting their targets during 2016. The targets relate mainly to the development of robust designs and consultation where appropriate, including on applications for planning permission. It was recognised that the timescales for some projects are challenging, but failure to deliver was not an option.

The projects would be supported through better governance and assurance measures and consideration would be given to setting up a new Major Projects Support Unit to deal with the capability and capacity issues being experienced by some delivery partners.

In the Closed Session Members were advised of the current progress on exploring options to ensure continued access to St Helena. There had been some significant progress in identifying suitable aircraft and air service operators, although there is no immediate solution available. This work will take some time, and in the meantime the continued use of the RMS is being explored. It is hoped that an announcement on the favoured access option for the immediate future will be made soon, although this is very much dependent on the outcome of a range of discussions currently under way. Naturally, we maintain close contact with colleagues in DFID and with aviation experts who have been contracted to undertake some of this the work.

ExCo
31 May 2016