EXCO meeting of 10 January 2012

The first meeting of EXCO in 2012 was held this morning.

Following extensive public consultation a new Immigration Ordinance was approved and enacted by Legislative Council in June 2011. Today Members of EXCO were asked to approve Immigration Regulations and Policy Guidance which explain how the Ordinance should be applied. The new Ordinance and supporting regulations provide St Helena with a modern, transparent and much improved framework to better manage immigration issues. They are also crafted to be investment friendly to help support economic development.  Having today approved the regulations and policy guidance, the already enacted Immigration Ordinance should enter into force later this month.

We then considered a paper prepared by the Financial Secretary which sought EXCO’s approval to submit to the next meeting of Legislative Council a Supplementary Appropriation Bill.  A review of government finances in November 2011 indicated that actual expenditure was running at just over £1 million behind budget while revenue was some £300,000 under budget.  Although government remains well on track to achieve a balanced budget over the financial year as a whole, some realignment of allocated funds was necessary to reflect unanticipated expenditure and under spends.  This is standard procedure and is in accordance with the St Helena Constitution which states, *‘If in the course of any financial year it is found that the amount appropriated for any purpose is insufficient, or that a need has arisen for expenditure for a purpose for which no amount has been appropriated, a Supplementary Estimate showing the sums required shall be laid before the Legislative Council’*.

Councillor Tony Green will shortly leave for Brussels to represent St Helena there on 23 January at a Ministerial Conference of the EU Overseas Countries and Territories Association. In preparation for that conference EXCO approved the text of a draft political declaration which Councillor Green and representatives of other Overseas Territories would be invited to sign in Brussels. The declaration sets out an improved framework for partnership and engagement between the EU and the Overseas Countries and Territories, covering areas such as trade, environment, climate change and strategies for innovation and development.

A variety of issues were briefly discussed under any other business including progress on the White Paper on the Overseas Territories, plans to mark Her Majesty’s Diamond Jubilee and the recent overbooking problem with the MOD’s air bridge flights through Ascension Island.

The meeting began at 09.30 and ended just before noon.

**Mark Capes**

**Governor**

**10 January 2012**