**EXCO meeting of 13 November 2012**

Before I begin my report on our meeting of EXCO today I want to say a few words about the sad loss of our friend and former Councillor Michael Benjamin, affectionately known as ‘Newpence’, who passed away on Friday last week.  I’m glad that I was with Michael at a social occasion on the day before he died. With his ever sharp wit he was great company as always. He was in good form and we enjoyed much laughter at some of the nonsense and rumour circulating in recent weeks. A big smile, sharp wit and warm friendship - that is how I shall remember Newpence on that last time I saw him.

Michael is a great loss to St Helena for he was just the sort of individual that the island needs, especially at this time of change.  He was an energetic and imaginative entrepreneur with a positive, ‘can do’ mindset.  To his family I extend sincere condolences on behalf of myself and all my colleagues in Executive Council.

For our first paper today we were joined by several officials to help us consider a paper on the proposals to undertake the construction of a wharf in Jamestown and a permanent jetty in Rupert’s Bay. Due to funding constraints both could not be undertaken at the same time and we were told that failure to take a decision now could,  result in SHG losing the funding for sea front development  allocated under the EDF programme and also funding earmarked by  DfID under the airport project.  By transferring cargo operations to Rupert’s Bay much needed space at Jamestown wharf would be freed up and more efficient loading and unloading of cargo would be possible when regular cargo ships are able to dock at Rupert’s Bay. With that in mind we agreed that priority should be given to using the funds to construct a permanent jetty at Rupert’s Bay in the expectation that more EDF funds may become available in 2016/17 to go ahead with a wharf at Jamestown.

The next item was an update from David Thompson Director of Infrastructure and Utilities, assisted by Dave Malpas, Roads Manager. We received an overview on progress with several projects but gave special focus to road improvements. Mr. Malpas said he would issue a press release to provide the public with details of roads to be maintained and how the maintenance would be carried out. He and the Director agreed that work on the roads programme had not gone that well for a variety of reasons, and not least because of a capacity/skills issue, but progress was being made.  Planning for divestment of utilities (water and electricity) in April 2013 was still on track and a public information exercise on the sound reasons for divestment would begin early in the New Year.

We then looked at proposals to amend the Elections Ordinance 2009 to allow for one constituency in time for the next general election, due to be held in 2013. This matter had been the subject of earlier discussions and received no objections from Councillors.  Some very minor tidying up amendments were also approved.

Next up was a proposal to establish a Community Development Organisation (CDO) and Grant Scheme. Liz Johnson joined EXCO for this item.  Councillors were asked to approve the proposal in principle and all had no difficulty in doing so. The CDO would provide direct support to Civil Society Organisations through training and small grants. Once the legal basis on which the CDO will be established is addressed it will be launched with some publicity to raise awareness of it and to invite bids for support.

Our final paper was quite straightforward. It sought to revise vehicle inspection and re-inspection fees for heavy goods vehicles by £5 pounds in both cases so that they would then be £25 and £15 respectively. This was approved. The date for the increase will be announced in due course but is likely to be 1 December 2012.

This was probably my last EXCO before I leave next week to attend the Joint Ministerial Council in London at which all Overseas Territories will be represented by Governors and elected representatives.   My best wishes to all of you for the Christmas Season and for a very happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

**Mark Capes**

**Governor**

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