EXCO meeting of 22 May 2012

Good afternoon. First may I say that I hope Saints everywhere enjoyed a good day yesterday as we celebrated St Helena day. I’m glad that I was able to get back from my visit to the UK in time to mark my first St Helena day.

The purpose of my trip to the UK was to attend the annual Foreign Office Leadership Conference and also a Governors’ conference. Both were very useful. At the Leadership Conference we were privileged to have the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Home Secretary come to talk to us about government priorities and objectives. At the Governor’s Conference we met with DfID Minister Alan Duncan and with Henry Bellingham, the FCO Minister responsible for the Overseas Territories.

Of course, these are difficult times financially for many governments, including in the UK where tough decisions are being taken to reduce expenditure in health, social welfare and in many other government services. The clear message was that we would have to work harder and do more with fewer resources. Extracting better value for money and greater efficiencies in all areas of activity would remain vitally important. That said there was much happy anticipation about the 2012 Olympics and also many people were looking forward to marking in many different ways Her Majesty’s Diamond Jubilee.

But back to EXCO this morning. The first paper was simply to give Councillors details of the recently revised fuel prices. The increase was due in part to the US dollar price of fuel increasing and also to the relatively small shipment of fuel on 8 May, which resulted in a higher average delivery cost per litre.

We then reviewed a letter about the application of the Land Development Control Plan, seeking to have a certain area rezoned. Following this we considered another letter to the Governor- in- Council which sought approval for a business to be exempted from the new legislation to be implemented later this year which will ban smoking in public places.

Under ‘any other business’ I gave Councillors a brief readout of the conferences I attended in London and also of my 3 day official visit to Ascension Island last week.

I asked for an update on the measures to be introduced to ensure that the people of Sandy Bay continued to have ready access to clinical services when the Sandy Bay clinic closes at the end of this month; Carol George, Director of Health attended to provide details of the measures being proposed.

I welcomed reports that feedback on the SHELCO project, outlined over the past week or so by Sir Nigel Thompson and his visiting team from SHELCO, had been encouragingly positive.

Thank you very much for listening and a good afternoon to you all.

***Mark Capes***

**Governor**

**22 May 2012**