

Constituency Meeting

Kingshurst Community Centre



Monday – 30 October 2025 at 7:30 pm

Date: Thursday, 30 October 2025

Venue: Kingshurst Community Centre (KHCC)

Chair: Hon. Robert Midwinter (District Representative, St Paul's)

Present: Chief Minister, Minister Henry, Minister Brooks, Minister Turner, Cllr J Thomas, Cllr. Dr. Essex, Cllr D Thomas, Cllr Beard, Cllr Leo, Cllr Coleman and 21 members of the public.

Apologies: Hon. Karl Thrower (overseas on official duty)

1. Opening and Introductions

Councillor Robert Midwinter opened the meeting, welcoming attendees and explaining that the evening would be recorded for accurate notetaking. He asked that personal matters be raised privately after the meeting. Elected members introduced themselves and any queries for Minister Thrower's Portfolios would be routed through the Chief Minister, who is his point of contact.

2. Updates from Previous Meeting

Councillor Midwinter provided progress reports on earlier action items:

- Sewage at Cape Villa: Issue resolved through the EDIP pipeline project; a new septic tank ordered and expected in January for installation by local works team.
- Water Tariffs: The URA had previously approved staged tariff increases over several years. These remain in effect.
- Non-Revenue Water: Rates have risen to 48.76%, showing no improvement.
- Community Play Areas: Discussions underway through the councillors' meeting to develop community-led projects; EDIP has committed to funding several play areas.
- Parking and Safety Mirrors: Requests passed to the Roads Section; work is added to monthly schedules as resources allow.
- Support for Local Poultry Farmers: Response obtained from ANRD, however matter is for follow up with individual concerned.

3. Transparency and Communication

Community members raised concerns over a perceived lack of transparency in government processes. Councillors acknowledged this and outlined measures to improve communication:

- Councillor Julie Thomas has been appointed Communications Champion for the seven councillors.
- Notes and follow-up actions taken away from constituency meetings will now be published publicly.
- Increased media engagement is planned, including potential weekly radio updates and "In Scope" style briefings.
- The Chief Minister confirmed the Executive Council (ExCo) report is now being made public immediately following meetings, with sensitive material redacted where necessary.
- Ministers are developing a formal Communications Strategy to improve engagement, supported by Minister Andrew Turner.

Action:

- Secretaries to publish councillor meeting summaries.
- Councillors to establish weekly radio/press segments.
- Chief Minister to finalise communication strategy before year-end.

4. Public Service Engagement

Members of the public urged senior officials and directors to visit local sites rather than rely on reports. The Chief Minister and Councillor Julie Thomas agreed, confirming that ministers have begun field visits. It was also suggested that the new Head of Public Service conduct similar community outreach.

Outcome:

Council will recommend that departmental directors conduct on-site reviews and public service engagement sessions.

5. Road Traffic Ordinance and Drink Driving Policy

Significant discussion occurred around the new drink-driving limits and road traffic legislation:

- Concerns were expressed about a lack of public education prior to enforcement, the fairness of stop-and-test checks, and the need for affordable breathalyser kits for self-assessments.
- Concerns were raised, why St Helena cannot have the upgraded Drivers Licence when Ascension has had them for the last ten years.
- Members acknowledged that police educational campaigns did not take place before enforcement.
- Historical background was provided: earlier versions of the ordinance were delayed due to poor drafting and limited policy capacity.
- Residents asked what statistics were used to support the legislation to lower drink-driving limit; it was confirmed that international statistics were used along with a local fatal accident. Residents felt that if international statistics can be used for this, it should be used for everything. Members recognised economic and social impacts on hospitality venues. Clarification was also provided that recent local prosecutions were based on levels exceeding both the previous and current legal limits.

Outcomes:

- Police to adopt a more educational and proportionate enforcement approach.
- Review and public communication plan to be developed.
- Road Traffic Ordinance to be finalised, including driving licence reforms.
- Consideration to be given to improved public data and breathalyser availability.

6. Legislative Priorities and Governance

A resident queried the Government's legislative priorities. Members confirmed a draft legislative schedule inherited from the previous council is under review, and a public-friendly version will be released once refined by the Attorney General's Chambers. The Chief Minister explained the Governance Review Panel will prioritise recommendations, including resource allocation for legislative drafting.

Action:

- AG's Chambers to prepare a version of the summary of legislative priorities for public release.
- Governance Review Panel to report timeline and progress to Legislative Council.

7. Legal Representation Concerns

A concern was raised regarding new legal aid and cost control regulations perceived to restrict overseas representation. Councillor Julie Thomas clarified that access to international lawyers remains permitted but capped at UK regional rates rather than London rates, to control costs to St Helena Government.

Outcome:

Public information to be shared explaining the purpose of the Legal Aid Cost Regulations and clarifying continued access to overseas legal counsel.

8. Telecoms Contract

Questions were raised on the Sure contract and its expiry. The Chief Minister confirmed it operates as a rolling 12-month notice contract, extended from six months to ensure service stability. Negotiations continue to protect St Helena's long-term technological and economic interests.

It was emphasised that any future contract must ensure sustainable pricing, flexibility for technological advances, and secure national infrastructure.

Action:

- Chief Minister's Office to confirm contract details and publish a public summary.
- Continue exploration of competitive models used by Ascension and Falklands for comparison.

9. Half Tree Hollow CDA and Sewage

Completion target for Half Tree Hollow and Jamestown sewage systems set for 2027, after which CDA housing can be connected and occupied. Developers may proceed earlier if compliant alternative waste systems are approved.

10. Utility Charges and URA

Members of the public criticised ongoing 35% increases in water tariffs while system losses remain near 49%. Calls were made for the URA to commission an independent efficiency review of Connect before approving further

increases. It was pointed out that residents whose usage is falling into the unoccupied category are being charged £45 and to overcome this some are choosing to leave on lights etc to avoid this.

Action:

- Council to formally request that the URA undertake an external efficiency review of Connect; raised by Councillor Derek Thomas as a Motion in the House on Friday 24th October 2025.
- Ministers to engage with URA regarding progress on loss reduction targets.

11. Renewable Energy

The Chief Minister reported that the EDIP programme and Go Green initiative are working to restore some wind turbines and modernise infrastructure. St Helena's delegation recently attended a regional renewable energy summit in St Eustatius.

Objective: improve resilience, reduce fuel costs, and support sustainable development.

12. Vision and Continuity

Former ministerial strategies and collaboration with the FCDO were acknowledged as foundations to build upon. While the new government may refine the Vision and Strategic Outcomes Framework, most key priorities—education, health, communications, and infrastructure—will continue.

A resident highlighted the importance of policy continuity to sustain financial gains achieved through UK partnership. The Chief Minister affirmed that while policy direction may evolve, the focus on people, communication, and sustainable growth remains central.

13. Other Matters Raised included:

- Street signage and maintenance: Residents reminded to use SHG's "Report It, Sort It" online portal; councillors to assist those unable to access it.
- Elderly healthcare appointments: Report of an elderly patient being asked to attend a clinic unnecessarily; the Minister of Health confirmed the issue was rectified and instructed it not to reoccur.
- Fishing:
 - Concerns that PQT given an extension to submit business plan, when it was said in PAC that the plan was completed.
 - Concerns that the value of the factory has depreciated with no return.
 - Recommendations that the contract needed a reset.
- Community projects: Attendees suggested involving local volunteers in small-scale improvement projects.
- Zebra Crossings: A zebra crossing from the Bank to Thorpes Grocery was requested with no feedback and the existing crossing needs a repaint.
- Signs around the island need repairing and/or repainting.
- Ruperts Port:
 - Concerns were raised about the space and other freight handling charges being imposed at the Ruperts Port, eroding business markup and will eventually be passed onto customers. A request for rates to be published.
 - Concerns were also raised regarding the accessibility to the beach
 - No privacy, for discussing immigration matters.
- Formal LegCo: The last session, the speaker did not allow Supplementary questions, portrayed as not good governance.
- Education Update
 - Why were the last results not published – this was followed up after the meeting and a Press Release had been issued by SHG
 - How is the uplift in wages for Apprenticeship monitored for absences.
 - Review post 16 offerings.
- Agriculture:
 - Invasive Species discussion resulted in a request for the agriculture policy working group to be re-established.
 - Concerns raised that farming needs urgent attention and viewed as a priority sector needing revitalization.
 - Reduce import dependency
 - Expand local high-value crop production
 - Improve resilience of the farming sector

- Request for data to be provided
 - The community is asking for government led-strategic intervention.
- Liquor Licence Holders: Concerns that Police had asked holders to erect CCTV, with no consultation.
- Immigration Visitors Forms: It was queried why these were being re-introduced, pointed out that the collection of that data was not taken into consideration.

Closing Remarks

The Chair thanked attendees for their active participation and assured that all issues raised would be documented and published. Residents who did not get to voice their concerns were encouraged to write to Chair.