

Constituency Meeting

Half Tree Hollow Community Centre
Wednesday 18 February 2026 at 7:30 pm



Chair: Councillor Derek Thomas

Secretary: Karen Henry

In Attendance: Head of the Public Service, Mr. Ian Todd
29 members of the public

1. Opening Remarks

Councillor Derek Thomas welcomed all present and thanked residents for the strong attendance. Appreciation was extended to Karen Henry for agreeing to record the minutes. It was noted this meeting followed up on concerns raised at the previous session held on 18 October 2025 and the first part of the meeting would focus on matters relating to government services, particularly staffing, transport disruption, and related operational issues.

The Head of the Public Service, Mr. Ian Todd, attended to hear concerns directly from constituents, emphasising that while Elected Members do not control staffing decisions operationally, concerns can be escalated to senior officials for review and action.

2. Airport Disruption and Air Access

A significant portion of discussion focused on recent flight disruptions affecting access to St Helena and Ascension.

The HoPS explained that negotiations had been complex due to the involvement of Airlink and the Ascension Island Government. Challenges arose because only specially qualified flight crews can land at St Helena Airport due to its categorisation. Pilot availability was limited. After negotiations, confirmation was received that a recovery flight would operate on 24 February, routing St Helena–Ascension–St Helena–Johannesburg. Thirteen outbound passengers were affected by a 24-hour delay; all had been contacted and support was offered.

Whilst acknowledging press releases and radio interviews, residents expressed disappointment that television announcements were not used to communicate, as not everyone uses Facebook.

Concerns were raised about the financial implications of the disruption. The HoPS stated that total costs are not yet known. Insurance is expected to offset some expenditure, including commercial insurance and passenger travel insurance claims. An independent investigation into the incident has been committed to by the Governor.

The high cost of airfares and the impact on tourism and local mobility was discussed. It was explained that government subsidises every flight. Aircraft servicing St Helena are smaller and not always full, unlike large international aircraft operating high-density routes. Negotiations

continue with Airlink to identify a price balancing sustainability and passenger numbers. Alternative operators have been explored; however, no commercial airline is currently willing to operate the route.

Action:

- Independent and transparent investigation to proceed.
- Commitment made to include TV broadcasts where feasible.

3. Infrastructure and Funding (EDIP & FCDO Settlement)

Concerns were raised regarding the sewage system works in Jamestown and Half Tree Hollow; residents had built properties in Half Tree Hollow on the understanding that they would be connected. Also building contracts, which are given out late therefore contractors are rushed to complete the works.

The current EDIP funding is nearing completion, so a replacement funding is anticipated but not yet confirmed. Competing demands exceed available capital. Sewage upgrades are currently unfunded and may remain on the “oversubscribed list.”

4. Staffing, Technical Cooperation (TC) Posts, and Succession Planning

This topic generated substantial discussion.

Concerns were raised regarding Saints being unsuccessful in job applications locally and overseas, yet SHG wishes to attract them back home. Some people do not wish to go abroad but wages play a big factor in leaving. The population is declining and the island is losing skilled Saints.

The HoPS acknowledged resident’s concerns and expressed a personal ambition to develop a Saint capable of succeeding him within three years.

On criminal record screening, he acknowledged that a blanket “computer says no” approach is inappropriate and that discretion should be applied based on relevance and rehabilitation principles. Applicants should also be informed of the reasons why they were unsuccessful for a job. Succession planning will be looked at going forward.

6. Healthcare Provision and Medical Referrals

Residents expressed concerns about the waiting time for an appointment with the doctor and the criteria for sending people away on referrals.

It was explained that even though there are more than 2 Doctors on the island, the volume of work has increased and the healthcare that is provided is bordering on unaffordable.

Priority for medical referrals are dependent on the type of injury and equipment needed. Increased diagnostic capacity and telemedicine links with South Africa have reduced unnecessary travel.

Complaints should be formally lodged to enable investigation and systemic improvement. Councillor Thomas offered support in submitting complaints.

Action:

- Councillor Thomas agreed to see if a Wet Room could be installed in the Men's Ward at the General Hospital.

7. Fisheries and Fresh Fish Supply

Residents reiterated concerns about limited availability of fresh fish despite being surrounded by sea. A task force has been established under the Tourism/Economic Development portfolio to review fisheries access and supply chains. Observation was made that former fishers may have moved into alternative employment.

8. Youth Facilities and Community Centre Upgrades

The need for improved youth facilities beyond New Horizons was discussed. The Community Centre committee was commended for volunteer efforts but the facilities require upgrading to serve as a safe youth and community hub. A Proposal paper is being prepared for Council to explore funding options for refurbishment.

9. Telecommunications

Whilst the undersea cable is in place, last-mile connectivity to homes remains problematic. Funding and infrastructure improvements are required, which Ministers are working on.

10. Three-Day Work Scheme & Apprenticeships

Councillor Thomas confirmed they are pushing for implementation of the three-day work scheme from the new financial year, to enable capable individuals to contribute meaningfully to the community.

Apprenticeship development is being advanced, particularly in trades facing skills shortages (electricians, carpenters, masons). A recent visit to Connect highlighted positive examples.

11. Traffic and Parking Issues

Residents asked if the parks opposite Atlantic Stores are strictly for Taxis and whether anyone could use the disabled parks. There is no legislation in place to stop all users using these parks, but this came from the Highways Authority initially.

Concern was expressed that the school buses were dropping off children at A&D's Minimart and they had to cross the road which was dangerous. Constituents asked if consideration could be given to dropping children off at the HTH Community Centre.

Could Motorcycle licensing age review (proposal to allow 17-year-olds up to 125cc) and bicycle usage on Ladder Hill Road be reviewed? Constituents noted lack of updated Road Traffic Ordinance limits enforcement capacity.

12. Connect (Electricity and Water Infrastructure)

Extensive discussion occurred regarding electricity generation costs, declining population impact, renewable energy expansion, ageing generators, and long-term sustainability.

Councillors reported a productive engagement with Connect, noting:

- Solar farm contributes positively.
- Wind turbines ageing (>10 years).
- Infrastructure upgrades required to significantly reduce diesel reliance.
- Subsidy must be carefully managed to avoid burdening consumers.

Concerns were raised about governance alignment between Connect and SHG and clarity around reporting.

13. Financial Sustainability and Personal Responsibility

Discussion touched on health-related taxation (sugar, alcohol, tobacco) as a preventative measure. The HoPS reminded members that it is the individual's duty to take care of their personal health. Residents acknowledged limited fresh produce availability but were encouraged to exercise moderation within constraints.

14. Tourism & Toilets

Concern was expressed about the number of public toilets around the island. Tourists are always welcomed on the island, and we need to ensure this kind of infrastructure is available for them and islanders alike.

Action:

- Councillor Thomas agreed to take this forward

15. Ruperts

Action:

- Councillor Thomas agreed to investigate why there is no access to the Liberation House on Saturday's

15. Closing Remarks

The HoPS thanked residents for candid engagement and committed to continued attendance at constituency meetings.

Councillor Thomas thanked all attendees for their constructive participation and encouraged them to continue raising concerns constructively and to submit formal complaints where appropriate to ensure accountability and systemic improvement.

The meeting closed at 9:50 pm.