



**St Helena
Government**

ST HELENA GOVERNMENT
PROCEEDING OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
THURSDAY 27TH MARCH 2025
FIRST SITTING OF TWENTIETH MEETING

Laid upon the Table 17 July 2026

ST. HELENA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE SPEAKER

The Honourable Cyril Gunnell

EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

The Honourable Acting Attorney General, Mr. Andrew Dawson (Overseas)
(Participating via Teams)

ELECTED MEMBERS

The Honourable Gillian Ann Brooks
The Honourable Mark Alan Brooks
The Honourable Ronald Arthur Coleman
The Honourable Dr Corinda Sebastiana Stuart Essex
The Honourable Jeffrey Robert Ellick
The Honourable Martin Dave Henry
The Honourable Elizabeth Knipe
The Honourable Robert Charles Midwinter
The Honourable Christine Lilian Scipio
The Honourable Julie Dorne Thomas
The Honourable Karl Gavin Thrower
The Honourable Andrew James Turner

CLERK OF COUNCILS

Miss Anita Legg

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday 27th March 2025

The Council met at 10am
In the Council Chamber, Jamestown

(The Honourable Speaker in the Chair)

ORDER OF THE DAY

- 1. FORMAL ENTRY OF THE SPEAKER**
- 2. PRAYERS
(CANON SPYKER)**
- 3. ADDRESS BY THE SPEAKER**

Honourable Members and everyone else present today in the Council Chamber, in Castle, Jamestown, and also those tune in to SAMS radio one, including those live streaming, to listen to this broadcast of Legislative Council meeting, a very warm welcome and good morning to you all, wherever you may be listening. Not present today is our Acting Attorney General, Mr. Andrew Dawson, who currently is away from the island in the UK. Mr. Dawson has requested to be able to participate virtually at this meeting, and relies on Standing Order 1, Rule 3, paragraphs 6 and 7, to accommodate this, and I am content that Mr. Dawson should be allowed to participate virtually. I probably will have difficulty seeing the screen occasionally and would rely on Honourable Members to alert me if I happen not to see Mr. Dawson indicating he would want to speak. The business for today relates to the first sitting of the 20th meeting of Legislative Council for this Council's term of office. I relayed in our Council meeting in February that an independent review is being conducted of the St Helena 2021 Constitutional Order Reforms and implementation of Ministerial Government by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. I had been going on, and the team has been among us already asking questions and hearing points of view, and based on the meetings they had, they've forwarded an interim report of the St Helena Governance Review. I'm happy to report that the team of Doctor Ronan Cormacain, hope I got that right, Steven Tweedy and Lord Lisvane will be back on the island, arriving this week and already they have set up appointments for further discussion. The business on the Order Paper today is as follows: 11 sessional papers to be laid on the table, 15 questions for oral response and one for a written answer, and also two motions for debate, and this is followed by the customary adjournment debate, where all Members will have opportunity to speak on a wide range of interests. I extend, once again, grateful thanks to Cannon Spyker for leading the prayers this morning, to Mr. Keith Brinsden for once again delivering the Mace, and to South Atlantic Media Services for broadcasting these proceedings live. Our Clerk for this meeting is the Clerk of Councils, Miss Anita Legg. May we have the first item of business please Miss Legg.

4. PAPERS

SP 11/2025 - Hon. Minister for Treasury & Economic Development

The Speaker -

The Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper, 11/2025, entitled St Helena Government, a Bill for Ordinance, Third Supplementary Appropriation, 24/25 Bill, 2024 and I also have a certificate for authority to proceed. May I deliver that too at the same time?

The Speaker -

Just let me see that as you come this way. Thank you very much.

Ordered to lie on the table

SP 12/2025 – Hon. Minister for Treasury & Economic Development

The Speaker -

The Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to present Sessional Paper 12/2025, entitled St Helena Government, Third Supplementary Estimates, 24/25.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much.

Ordered to lie on the table

SP 13/2025 - Hon. Minister for Treasury & Economic Development

The Speaker -

The Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr. Speaker, may I ask for permission to remove my jacket before we continue?

The Speaker -

You may.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper, 13/2025, entitled St Helena Government Financial Statements 23/24.

Ordered to lie on the table

SP 14/2025 - Hon. Minister for Treasury & Economic Development

The Speaker -

The Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 14/2025, entitled St Helena Government, Audit St Helena Management Letter to Legislative Council and Financial Statements 2023/2024.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much.

Ordered to lie on the table

SP 15/2025 - Hon. Minister for Treasury & Economic Development

The Speaker -

Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 15/2025, entitled St Helena Government, Withdrawal Warrant 2024/25.

Ordered to lie on the table

SP 16/2025 - Hon. Minister for Treasury & Economic Development

The Speaker -

The Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr. Speaker, thank you. I beg to present Sessional Paper 16, entitled St Helena Government, Special Withdrawal Warrant 1 of 2024/25.

The Speaker -

Thank you.

Ordered to lie on the table

SP 17/2025 – Hon. Chief Minister

The Speaker -

The Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper, entitled St Helena Government, Proceedings of Legislative Council and 10th Sitting of Ministers Question Time, Friday, 16th of February 2024.

The Speaker -

Thank you.

Ordered to lie on the table

The Speaker -

Honourable Members in accordance with Standing Order two, Rule six, I put the question that if Members are satisfied with the verification of the Clerk that the draft record of the Proceedings of 10th Sitting of Ministers Question Time, Friday, 16th of February 2024 be confirmed.

Question put and agreed.

SP 18/2025 – Hon. Chief Minister

The Speaker -

The Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper, 18 of 2025, entitled St Helena Government, Proceedings of Ministers Question Time, Tuesday, 25th of June 2024, 12th Sitting.

The Speaker -

Thank you.

The Speaker -

Honourable Members in accordance with Standing Order two, Rule six, I put the question that if Members are satisfied with the verification of the Clerk that the draft record of the Proceedings of Ministers Question Time, Tuesday, 25th June 2024, 12th Sitting, be confirmed.

Question put and agreed.

SP 19/2025 – Hon. Chief Minister

The Speaker -

The Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 19 of 2025, entitled St Helena Government, Proceedings of Legislative Council, Thursday, 25th of May 2023, First Sitting of the 12th Meeting.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much.

Ordered to lie on the table

The Speaker -

Honourable Members in accordance with Standing Order two, Rule six, I put the question that if Members are satisfied with the verification of the Clerk that the draft record of the proceedings of the Legislative Council, Thursday, 25th of May 2023, first sitting of the 12th meeting be confirmed.

Question put and agreed.

SP 20/2025 – Hon Minister for Treasury & Economic Development

The Speaker -

Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper, 2020/2025 entitled St Helena Government, loan balances recoverable by St Helena Government as of the 31st of December 2024.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much.

Ordered to lie on the table

SP 21/2025 – Hon Minister for Treasury & Economic Development

The Speaker -

The Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 21/2025 entitled Audit St Helena, Performance Audit, Fishing Operations Agreement, March 2025.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much.

Ordered to lie on the table

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

Mr. Speaker, I just raised rise on a point of order. I would like to place a motion. I beg to move that Sessional Paper that has just been laid pertaining to the fisheries audit, Sessional Paper 21/2025 be open for debate immediately. Under Order 11, Rule 1(b) of Standing Orders, a motion for debate can be called with exception to notice.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. You wish to move a motion to cause a debate, relating to the Sessional Paper pertaining to the fisheries audit just laid and you rely on Order 11, 12 1(b) of the Standing Orders, a motion for debate can be called, with exception to notice to support this. I am aware the Sessional Paper was sent to Honourable Members for information, so they will be aware of the contents. But Honourable Member, tell me why you would like a debate.

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

I think, first of all, Mr. Speaker, if there is seconder, I can give an exposition as to why I want this debate.

The Speaker -

Well you still can tell me why you want to debate.

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

I do have concerns about this paper, Mr. Speaker, and I like to clarify certain parts within there. I know I can't change the paper, but I do think that the public and Members need to be aware of the full facts surrounding this paper, so and I will explain further in my exposition.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Is there a seconder?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Mr. Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Members I put the question that the Sessional Paper that has just been laid pertaining to the fisheries audit be open for debate.

Question put and agreed

The Speaker -

Honourable Member you may proceed.

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker....

The Speaker -

Okay, Members, the motion is and I should read it again, ending with the motion is now open for debate. The Speaker thereafter calls on each Honourable Member. So I shall do that, so you now should be able to address Honourable Member, as you were.

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

Mr. Speaker, whilst I'm aware that I cannot change anything within this report, I would like to raise my concerns and ensure that the facts are out there for the public. I also believe that other Members have concern about the report as well. I believe this is the forum that concerns can be debated so the public can have a full appreciation of the subject matter. Mr. Speaker, the report will try and insinuate that this government, Ministers, were a main component in frustrating the fishing venture. However, I would like to give Members a synopsis of what is not included in the report that gives context and real facts. Once I have given the synopsis, Members can respond to my exposition as to whether they support the debate or not. A vote will be cast and if there is support, Members can debate the matter, 10 minutes being allowed to each Member and finishing with myself responding to the debate, as the mover of the motion. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of components that need to be highlighted, such as, since 2016 there hasn't been any regulations in place for registering of local vessels under the Port Ordinance. Lack of regulations in the Merchant Shipping Ordinance, 2021. There was an MOU between MCA and SHG, where SHG, through the Attorney General's Office, received funding

to develop regulations of the Merchant Shipping Ordinance. However, this was not done. When this government was appointed, the Public Service did not brief this government on such matters. It was Ministers who identified these matters and how and now addressing such matters. It appears to me that when things go wrong, the first people to blame are Ministers. No one else wants to accept responsibility. Mr. Speaker, page 14, second paragraph, Saint Helena Government, I will say, had no knowledge of PQT, STC, attempting to purchase the Extractor. The report tells you what the author wants you to know. What it doesn't tell you is all the facts and the context behind a lot of the issues. Within the paragraph, it states, 'however, this evaluation was stopped by the responsible Minister before it began'. What it doesn't say is that officers were acting without lawful authority, as there was no provision in the Merchant Shipping Ordinance and regulations were required. The Minister informed the PD, had the checklist been issued, and something adverse happened to the vessel and the crew, SHG could be liable. The PD informed the Minister the MCA agree with the Maritime Authority for the issuing of the checklist. Upon checking with MCA, they confirm that they had not agreed for a checklist to be issued. As a result of this, an investigation was undertaken. It was clear that the action taken by the Minister was, in effect, the correct action, and actions by Officers were incorrect, would, could have had all the documentation pertaining to this, but did not wish to have it. Therefore, it could be perceived by readers that a Minister was making decisions without legal basis for justification. Mr. Speaker, if you look at page 16, last paragraph going on to page 17, I sent an email to the Audit in respect of this. It reads, 'Dear Brendan, to be clear, the fisheries officer has no expertise in registration therefore, if someone produces a certificate from another authority other than MCA, the Maritime Authority has to verify and approve this. Because we have no qualified surveys in the maritime authority section, we would then seek assistance from MCA. As you are well aware, STC, PQT tried to register the Iron Maiden and produce certificates documents from South African authorities. However, there were significant issues with the vessel when MCA checked, and our Maritime Authority was advised not to register the vessel. The same company is failing to honour the agreement by failing to register a new vessel which they have brought to St Helena, despite being advised by the government to apply for registration before coming to St Helena. You have a copy of this letter. It begs the question, why don't they want to register the vessel. This is a concern for me as the Minister for the relevant area, as this is a clear red flag. What you are recommending is not for SHG, in my view. PQT, STC, have to make a formal request to SHG to vary the MoU. They have not made the request through ExCo. Even if they were to make such a request, what difference would it make? We will still need to verify the documents and the vessel. Why would I try to cut corners and compromise the safety of people. If we decide to lower the standards for offshore fishing, then from my perspective, this would be irresponsible. SHG have a duty of care. Therefore, I see there is still misunderstanding, and I cannot agree with what is written. I think that Audit is around what has frustrated this venture. And all I can see now is one partner does not want to fulfill what they have signed up to, and expects the other partner to ignore their duty of care to persons working on a fishing vessel that fishes within our offshore. No one should be looking at technicalities to try and evade their duty of care responsibilities. Hence, the reason there is an agreement to register under the British flag so that both parties have the best protection. I'd be happy if you put all of the above in the report'. The report has not been changed. What the report also does not say is that the St Albatros has been in St Helena since February, and PQT, STC still have not furnished the relevant documentation pertaining to seaworthiness of their vessel. This should not be about one party can technically do, what one party can technically do to avoid parts of an agreement. This is a partnership. Both parties must agree. If they don't, then the relationship erodes and there will be no partnership. I understand, though, that my honourable colleague, the Minister for ENRP, is working with the relevant stakeholders to resolve the matter of all the relevant licensing

issues. The report states that a precedent has been set with an offshore fishing vessel. Well, not to my knowledge, as I stated in my email to the Audit, the fisheries officer is not a qualified inspector surveyor, when it comes to sea worthiness. However, I do have a report with advice from an MCA surveyor on the vessel in question, which is clear the vessels should not be allowed to fish offshore. I put these matters to the former Attorney General, who agreed verbally and stated that SHG has a duty of care. Now, something different has occurred, I'm not aware, and I can say, from a registration perspective, we would not go against an MCA surveyor's assessment. If Public Service officers have made decisions outside of this scope, I have not been officially informed of this. Mr. Speaker, I have correspondence relating to all of these matters, and the Audit has the authority to see all of these documents. I did inform them of this. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Members the motion is, really Honourable Minister Ellick, could you repeat what the wording of the motion is, just so the Clerk can record it.

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion is, I beg to move that Sessional Paper that has just been laid pertaining to the fisheries audit. You want me start again? Thank you. I beg to move that Sessional Paper that has just been laid pertaining to the fisheries audit, Sessional Paper, 21/2025 be open for debate immediately, under Order 11, Rule 1(b) of Standing Orders and a motion for debate can be called with exception to notice.

The Speaker -

Honourable Members, the motion is that Sessional Paper that has just been laid pertaining to the fisheries audit sessional paper be open for debate, under Order 11, Rule 1 (b) of Standing Orders, whereas a motion of debate can be called with exception to notice.

Question put and agreed

The Speaker –

The motion is open for debate. Councillor Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in response to my Honourable colleague's motion in order to contribute to the debate on the performance audit undertaken by Audit St Helena relating to the Fisheries Operations Agreement. Mr. Speaker, before doing so, I need to make a declaration of interest as the former Executive Director of Enterprise St Helena that was the nominated representative on the Board of Directors of Saint Marine Resources Limited, who were a former owner of the MFV Extractor, which is referred to within the audit report. Mr. Speaker, I have made this declaration of interest as it is the reported challenges faced by PQT STC, in securing an appropriate vessel that generally concern me the most, and the statements made therein regarding their failed attempt to procure the MFV Extractor that are of particular concern to me. Mr. Speaker, my particular concern centres on the line which reads, and I quote, 'while it is noted that no other fishing vessels in St Helena had been inspected during that interval, those vessels had remained operational'. Mr. Speaker, my personal interpretation of this line is that this would appear to suggest some disparity between how different local fishing vessels are treated by the St Helena Government, and in this respect, I would say quite rightly so, as the MFV Extractor is a completely different kettle of fish to other local fishing vessels. Mr. Speaker, to put this into simple terms that members of our community might relate to,

sorry, might relate better to, this is like comparing one of the new public transport buses with a private motor vehicle. From a licensing and public safety perspective, you simply cannot compare the two. Mr. Speaker, I am therefore pleased to read that the responsible Minister stopped the safety checklist process before this reached a point where the MFV Extractor, a 22 meter vessel that is supposed to have a full MCA or SAMSA accredited inspection every five years, including a survey on the hull, and yet has been sat in our harbour without such since it arrived from South Africa on Saturday, the 19th of April, 2014, almost 11 years ago. Mr. Speaker, what on earth were the noted SHG officials thinking when they proposed designing such a safety checklist, especially as there is no certified Lifting Gear currently available on island to lift the Extractor out of the water, in order that an inspection of the hull can be undertaken. SHG officials suggest that it was no one particular individual but who ultimately was responsible for going down this route in the first place. Mr. Speaker, reading on through the report, I have more general concerns about the lack of clear systems and processes related to ensuring that all vessels, not only fishing vessels, are safe and fit for purpose. And I am pleased to note that the Auditors have highlighted this as a recommendation. Mr. Speaker, I am also concerned to read about the areas of ambiguity that have arisen as a result of what would appear to be poor drafting of the contractual agreements. And I would again ask the question, who was responsible for this? Mr. Speaker, whilst it is good to see that this report has at last been published and laid before this House, and in this respect, I would wish to acknowledge the work that has been undertaken by the Chief Auditor and his team, I honestly feel that this report raises so many further questions, which I hope will be picked up by the Public Accounts Committee during their detailed analysis and scrutiny. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, this is very last minute, so forgive me if my notes are a little bit unprepared, but it was. I think it's a bit difficult to really have an urgent debate, particularly when I'm not sure what the sort of the urgency is on this. On a audit report that's not yet finished, because, well, for a start, we've got three members of the PAC who are our colleagues here on the non-ministerial side of the bench, who now can't speak to this debate without potentially prejudicing the scrutiny that's still left to do, which I think is very unfair to them, who I'm sure have concerns about what's in this report too. I'm sure all of us do, and to be honest, I get why the Minister's upset by what's in it. It's very difficult to look at your own actions in a critical light, but I do think its pre-emptive now to debate this when we haven't had the proper scrutiny of this report, which is still to be done by the PAC. You know, this report needs to go through a process, and until it's done-so, neither the report nor the Minister's accusations can really be taken as anything substantial. And to be honest, I'm kind of kind of worried to see these sort of early level attacks on a scrutiny process of which this audit report is a part, but it is a part. There's still the main part left to do where I would have thought a lot of these questions, concerns and things are going to be fleshed out, going to be questioned by the PAC, so we can actually get to some kind of truth on this. So really, all I'm hoping is that whatever's happening today doesn't colour the now, really important work that the PAC is going to have to do in unpicking all of this.

The Speaker -

The Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Similarly to my Honourable Friend, Honourable Robert Midwinter, I will first need to declare an interest before I speak, because my husband is a commercial fisherman. But I too, am pleased that this performance audit has finally been completed, and as of a few moments ago, has now been placed in the public domain. This is an important step, and I would encourage members of the public who are interested to read it in its entirety. For some five years now, St Helena was promised a solution that would see our fishery grow, creating an operation that could directly benefit local fishermen. In addition, we were promised a plan that would supply a staple food source to the local market, whilst having the knowledge base needed to build St Helena's reputation as an exporter of high-quality fish. The report makes mention of the fact that our fishing industry has been plagued with problems throughout much of its history, which I believe is a well-founded claim. However, from what is presented in this report, I would question whether this can be dubbed historical, as the report would suggest that this history is continuing to repeat itself. The evaluation of the Fishing Operations Agreement tells us that on behalf of the local fishermen, SHG invested a total of half a million pounds to refurbish the Fish Processing Plants for use by STC. The conditions attached to this investment were that PQT would match government's capital funding through the procurement of offshore vessels to fish commercially, while also undertaking exploratory fishing scientific data at the sea mounts in St Helena, exclusive economic zone to determine further sustainable catch limits. To date, the report tells us that PQT has contributed total assets worth approximately 341,000 pounds, which includes the recently purchased fishing vessel valued at 216,500 pounds that arrived in our waters last month. No further comment is made on the discrepancy of the lack of match funding to the tune of some 159,000. The report then goes on to stipulate the responsibilities within the agreement for both parties, it depicts government has as having some five responsibilities, most of which relate to offering exploratory and commercial fishing licenses to enable much needed work to be undertaken offshore. Unfortunately, government has been unable to adhere to their primary responsibilities simply because PQT nor STC have applied for such licenses, as of the date of the report, which is claimed, March 2025. STC responsibilities, the report suggests, consists of two only, that is to purchase fish from non-members and to offer sale of ice to non-members. Both services we are told are being offered. Concluding the summary the audit report speaks of ambiguity in the agreement and an incomplete termination clause, which goes some way in shedding light on why it has been extremely difficult and time consuming for this government to make progress with our partners. The culvert near the fish processing plant that has been deemed not fit for purpose, is named as the primary reason preventing STC from exporting fish to foreign markets and thus threatening the viability of the joint venture between SHG and PQT. It then goes on to say that despite the agreement's requirement for timely resolution, this has not occurred, and the issues remained unresolved after 16 months, which is a fact, however, it has been clearly communicated to our partners what process needs to be followed before further discussions around this matter would be convened. This was articulated within the same letter reference in the report as time is of the essence. Based on the summary, I would like to focus on some areas within the body of the report that, in my opinion, questions the integrity or the completeness of the findings. Mention is made of the departure of a foreign investor in 2015 but does not speak of the fact that no subsidy was required of SHG to assist with operations. It referenced St Helena Fisheries Corporation receiving cumulative subsidies of approximately 1.387 million in the five years up to and including financial year 19/20 to pay for high electricity costs and the purchase of vital equipment. It did not explain that this vital equipment was, nor does it mention the fact that Fisheries Corp was never given capital investment it desperately required to run more efficiently. It tells us that government endorsed PQT in February 2020, but gives no explanation why it took over a year to sign the fishing operations agreement and lease agreement, which took place in April 2021. At the end of April 21, government announced that

STC was planning to assume control of the plant from 1st June 21 but makes no reference to the fact that the refurbishment was expected to be completed within six months. In fact, STC completed the refurbishment of the fish processing plant in August 22, almost a year behind schedule. The report, however, gives little detail of why this delay was so significant, referencing the delay of the blast freezer, only. The answer to the lack of detail could be attributed to the fact that this was a focused program audit. However, it is my opinion that the report lacks consistency in terms of consultation with all relevant parties, bearing in mind that the report was due to be completed originally in June 24. Due to the delay, the scope of the report was expanded, but from its content, it begs to question whether it reports objectively from all parties perspectives. I state this for various reasons. The report highlights PQT's commitment to provide offshore fishing vessels. When their proposal was submitted in January 2020, PQT were interested in three vessels, but due to the signing of the agreement being delayed, the targeted vessels were off the market. In October 22, a further attempt was made to procure with the first attempt to register a vessel capable of offshore fishing, the Iron Maiden. At the time, PQT had publicly advised that extensive work had been performed on the vessel to prepare it for registration. However, as Minister Ellick has mentioned, the Honourable Minister Ellick, when presented to the MCA fishing vessel flagging panel, as part of St Helena's obligation as a member of the Red Ensign group, the vessel was not recommended for registration, for a number of reasons, to include hull structure and stability. It was at this point that STC had publicly advised that the vessel had been certified by SAMSA. In June 23, the report tells us that PQT attempted to procure the MFV Extractor, which is what the Honourable Robert Midwinter makes reference to. The report suggests that the vessel was not registered and had not been inspected by a competent authority because the owner had not applied for a fishing license. This is incorrect, as no fishing license can be issued for offshore fishing until the vessel has been certified by a competent authority. Mention is made of a safety checklist being designed by the SHG officials that would have enabled the evaluation of the Extractor, which is explained further as being in contravention of the MCA inspection process, hence it could not be supported by the responsible Minister, or indeed the entire government. The report then moves on to speak about PQT, proposing to charter the MFV Bluefin. However, this did not proceed as PQT argued that it was not viable to register the vessel in St Helena, claiming to do so would be premature prior to the company knowing what its TAC was and which is the total allowable catch. PQT/STC have known that the total allowable catch has been, what it has been since signing the agreement in April 2021. So why is this being tabled as a deterrent? The report makes mention that PQT argued that conditions changed after the time of the MOU, where yellow fin tuna total allowable catch was reduced to 300 metric tons. This may well be true, but this occurred prior to PQT/STC signing the said agreements. So why did they proceed if they also claim that the allocations received did not justify purchasing a vessel rather than chartering it, which begs the question why we now have the St Albatross moored in James Bay, which we have been advised has been purchased. The report goes on to mention a letter issued to PQT/STC directors by Executive Council, referred to as time is of the essence, which stipulated that if PQT does not purchase a vessel within six months, SHG would be entitled to treat the contractual arrangements as at an end, unless an alternative time limit can be mutually agreed. This letter was dated 31 May 24, which made 30 November 24 the presumptive deadline. 18 days before the deadline, PQT signed an agreement to purchase the Albatross, a vessel we have been told is certified for seaworthiness by SAMSA. To date, however, such evidence has not been tabled to enable government, to enable our Maritime authority to undertake our necessary assessments to confirm seaworthiness. This is just a snapshot that supports my view that the report could have been more robust. In essence, what this report does depict however, which is of vital importance to this government, and what I would wish for the public to consider, is how difficult it has been for this government to build

a progressive working partnership with PQT, STC. In addition, it has also been frustrating to have to be constantly innovative in our approach due to the inadequacies of the legal agreements, coupled, at times, with inept decisions being taken on an operational level, which has resulted in members of my government, to include myself, being painted in a negative light in the public arena, being accused of not wanting to see this project and others meet fruition. This is so far from the truth of our aims. As a responsible government, we are purely wanting to ensure that the state, steps taken by this government is aligned with our vision and principles, which is to ensure we are a more accountable, responsible government that operates effectively, efficiently, ethically and lawfully with the best interests of St Helena and its people at the heart of our decision making. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Anyone else wish to speak? Councillor Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr. Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm speaking from my perspective as a member of the Public Accounts Committee, and I would like to start by just outlining, for the benefit of the public the actual processes involved when a performance audit report is laid. The first step is that the performance audit report gets laid in this House. Prior to that, the Public Accounts Committee does not have any involvement in it. After it has been laid, the Public Accounts Committee embarks on a detailed examination and scrutiny of that document and of the evidence that contributed to that document. Following that scrutiny, a live hearing is held at which interested parties are called to give evidence. During the period of the document under scrutiny by Public Accounts Committee, any interested parties or even general members of the public can submit comments, raise queries and question anything that they have read in the document on which they want further investigation to take place, or which they feel is factually inaccurate. Although, obviously, if they're claiming that something is factually inaccurate, the Public Accounts Committee would expect them to provide the evidence to prove that their claim is correct. All such information that is submitted is considered by the Public Accounts Committee. At the end of the live hearing, if there are still unanswered queries or questions that are under dispute, a further hearing is called and I think Honourable Members and the public will recall this is what happened with regard to expenditure in excess last year. So those processes are in place to ensure that the audit report is the first step and not the last step. The last step would be the formulation of the report from the Public Accounts Committee, along with its conclusions and recommendations, and that report, in turn, will get tabled in this House. And if, for any reason, any PAC final report was considered to be inadequate or incorrect, there is again, an opportunity for it to be challenged through the proper channels. So, at the moment, we are just at step one, with regard to this report, and it is the intention of the Public Accounts Committee, unless anything unforeseen arises, to try and ensure that its scrutiny is fully completed and its report concluded before the dissolution of this Council. Therefore, I would urge Ministers, officials and indeed the general public, if they have concerns such as those that they're raising in this House, to actually address those to the Public Accounts Committee for their consideration when they are scrutinising the documents, and that evidence that's presented will influence, for example, who gets asked to appear at the live hearing, and also the scope of the analysis that is undertaken by the Public Accounts Committee. Although there is nothing written in Standing Orders or in any statute to forbid Members of the Public Accounts Committee from commenting further on a debate of this kind, by convention and the Honourable Speaker will recall from his time when he chaired Public Accounts Committee, it is not considered appropriate for members of Public Accounts Committee to comment on audit

reports until the Public Accounts Committee scrutiny process is concluded. So therefore I will not be responding to comments made in the House today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Does anybody else wish to speak? Councillor Gillian Brooks.

The Hon. Gillian Brooks

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, just to reiterate that that is for that very reason that I cannot make any comment today because I am a member of the Public Accounts Committee. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Anyone else wish to speak? Councillor Karl Thrower.

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to raise and agree with what my Honourable colleagues have already said, I'm also a member of the Public Accounts Committee, so I won't speak about this Sessional Paper, but I will just reiterate what my Honourable Friend, Dr Essex has just said. Everybody gets to feed back to the Public Accounts Committee. So, I would encourage anybody who's got any concerns, involvement, questions around this report to feedback, but I would also encourage them to read the report as well. We get a lot of feedback sometimes when they haven't read the report. So, what I will say, Mr. Speaker, is, it's a very important report. Clearly, there's a lot of emotion around it on island, and I would just encourage the public to feedback to the Public Accounts Committee so that we can actually ensure that the output of the Public Accounts Committee is as accurate and as beneficial to the island as possible, because we've got to get this situation sorted so that we can move on with developing the economy.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Anyone else wish to speak? Then, does the Honourable mover wish to respond to the debate, remembering not to introduce any new matters that did come up in the debate. Honourable mover do you wish to respond?

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank members who responded to the debate. In respect of the timing of this here, I do appreciate what PAC is actually saying. However Mr. Speaker, I think this is an appropriate time, because once the report is out Mr. Speaker, the damage is done. So from my perspective, to curtail that, that's why I asked for a motion in the House today, so the public knows when this report coming out, there's other issues surrounding this here, and they need to have the full facts. So that's my reason for putting this on the table today. Therefore I disagree with my Honourable friend Andrew Turner on these matters, because he suggests that I'm probably disgruntled about it, or whatever. The decisions I made, Mr. Speaker, is based on law. I didn't make this up, so that's my justification for it. But I also understand as well from the PAC perspective. But to me, the PAC, I might be wrong, Mr. Speaker, their scrutiny is mainly going to be on the financial aspects. The value for money is the main issue that they should be getting out of this sort of thing is, was this value for money? Yeah, just overall, they will pick the other bits in there as well, but that should be their main thing. From my perspective, when I see certain things that is coming out in papers and so forth that also look, I also look at it from a different perspective. When we start raising about the government and so forth, and if there's things in there that are not factually correct, we could be looking at defamation of character. So that's why I'm pointing out these issues here and now. What I also can say, Mr. Speaker, in

respect of moving things forward, there has been issues within my portfolio, however, we are now moving on. I can say is my portfolio is working with MCA to come up with policies to deal with local registration, and it is, I've already given policy intents under the aspect. So, we've moved on. There were issues before, but they are not highlighted in this report Mr. Speaker. Outside of that, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to thank Members for contributing to the debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. The motion is, I shall read it out. Thank you Clerk for writing it all out for me, that the Sessional Paper that has just been laid, pertaining to the fisheries audit, SP 21/2025 be open for debate immediately under Order 11, Rule 1(b) of Standing Orders and a motion for debate can be called with exception to notice.

Question put.

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Sorry, Mr. Speaker, can I just make a question on process? We've just had the debate, so how can we have a vote now on whether to have the debate?

The Speaker -

Well, it is unusual.

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Yeah, this is the confusion now as to the process.

The Speaker -

The Speaker has to put it that way after any debate, I'll say again.

Question put and agreed

The Speaker -

Shall we move on?

5. QUESTIONS

Question No. 1 - The Hon Elizabeth Knipe to ask the Hon Minister for Treasury and Economic Development

The Speaker -

The Honourable Elizabeth Knipe.

The Hon. Elizabeth Knipe -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development, tell this Council what key work streams under the Tourism Development Programme are being undertaken to assist in improving the number of eating places on the island, particularly on weekends for tourists and residents? Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. Mr. Speaker, the Tourism Development Program, or TDP, as we normally refer to it, provides for hospitality training courses. And they did this in November 2023 and October 2024, to meet the objective of the tourism recovery strategy under capacity, which includes training and upskilling within the tourism hospitality sector. So obviously, as all Members know, we have three main objectives under the tourism development strategy, and that is improved capacity to and so on, and under that heading, we did provide for lots of training. So Mr. Speaker in 2023 the TDP for that year, there were 110 attendees for courses offered, which covered hospitality operations, cutlery and customer service, and it was all paid for by the TDP fund. In 24 these courses was offered again and again. In addition to this, we had further courses in food hygiene and food and beverage service. 230 attendees were represented by the private sector for these courses. So I did mention this earlier this week in my Minister's Question Time and I didn't had the figure to hand, but I did say it was around 230 and I'm not far off, my Honourable friend. So it's been quite successful and I'd like to thank all those members of the private businesses that actually took the opportunity to go on these courses. And of course, we will continue to provide these, this sort of training in the future, if budgets allow. Also, Mr. Speaker, recently, there has been comments, and I know, from the public and also on Facebook regarding the opening hours of businesses at weekends and the general level of services that is provided to the tourism sector, particularly in our peak season, and, of course, our cruise ship days. So the tourism development, oh, sorry, the Tourism team and the Economic Development team too have been approaching a number of vendors to look at provisions service, particularly on Sundays. And I like to report Mr. Speaker, there has been some positive response from some vendors and service providers that we have spoken to. Mr. Speaker, I have also written a letter to the President of the Chamber of Commerce requesting that members be addressed on the matter and to see if they can determine a solution and how we can approve improve this offering. Mr. Speaker, as I have said on many occasions, to members of the public, if there is any member who thinks there are gaps in the service that SHG offer or any way that we can help support businesses; any ideas that you have, please come and talk to the sustainable, sorry to the Economic team, specifically the Investment Manager. And like I said, I will encourage anyone to come forward who does have a suggestion to offer. But as I've said on many occasions, Mr. Speaker, there is no direct financial help, but there might be other things that we can help with. I would also just like to finish Mr. Speaker by a big shout out to those businesses that did come out last Sunday, Sunday the 23rd and catered for the needs of our tourists. So I would like to mention them Mr. Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for her question.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Councillor Knipe.

The Hon. Elizabeth Knipe -

May I ask a question, please?

The Speaker -

Sorry?

The Hon. Elizabeth Knipe -

May I ask a question, please to the Minister?

The Speaker -

Off course you can.

The Hon. Elizabeth Knipe -

Can you tell me please, all these courses that the tourism have offered to the public, you mentioned a figure of 200 and something. Have you got any record of how many people have actually taken part, got involved on when cruise ships come in to partake in the facilities to assist the tourists?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. But that will be hard to do, because each cruise ship, obviously there's more, there's different people involved. For some cruise ships prebook tours. Some cruise ships don't, and it's very much up to the private sector whether they come out and cater for our visitors on these days. So no, we don't have a data sheet showing how many people on any specific day was actually open for business. But as I said, we can't make people open, but we can encourage people. We can talk to them, we can ask them, and obviously we can support them from a, you know, an advice perspective, as I said, there's no financial support, but no, I don't have that data.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Councillor Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Can I rise on a point of information please?

The Speaker -

You may.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Just to make the public aware that the request put to the Chamber of Commerce was discussed with members, and two options were suggested, which are recorded in the minutes of the Chamber, of which the Honourable Minister is a member. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Next question please.

Question No. 2 - The Hon Gillian Brook to ask the Hon Chief Minister

The Speaker -

The Honourable Gillian Brooks.

The Hon. Gillian Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister give an update on progress in regards to the new prison?

The Speaker -

Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for her question. Advancing the new build prison is of national importance and remains a high priority for SHG. Following open procurement, which commenced in July 2024 SHG intends to enter into a contract with a UK based consultancy, One Creative Environment, one for design and supervise services. Contract signing is imminent. In the interim, a letter of intent has been issued and accepted by One. The letter of intent will allow One to continue advancing the design phase of the project. Representatives from One are on island this week to conduct meetings and site visits, which will help them to understand the local project and construction environment. Final designs are expected to be approved in September 2025 however, consideration is being given to expedite some work packages ahead of this time, which could include ground works and procurement of specialist items. These advanced work packages could potentially commence in quarter three of 2025/26. The main build is estimated to take 18 months and is expected to commence in quarter one of 2026/27. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Councillor Gillian Brooks.

The Hon. Gillian Brooks -

Chief Minister, sorry, you may have mentioned a cost. Did you mention a costing in that as to what the costs have been so far? Do you have any costing so far?

The Speaker -

Do you have any costing Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you Mr. Speaker. No, the question just asked for update on progress. It didn't ask me for figures. So unfortunately, I don't have that with me here with me.

The Hon. Gillian Brooks -

That's fine Mr Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Next question please. Honourable Councillor, Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Honourable Chief Minister explain why the open procurement has taken almost a year to reach this point, if the prison construction is being given a high priority?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex for her question. Again, I think that is very much on an operational basis, not something that has been delayed from a ministerial level with decision making. As you rightly said, a planning application based on the concept design was submitted in December 2019 and full development permission was granted in March 2020, clearance work on the site work completed in 2024, which satisfied and discharged the pre-commencement planning conditions. But I don't know if Minister Ellick, if

you're able to talk about process, because obviously I am not part of Safety, Security and Home Affairs, so I don't obviously get involved with the, that part of this. But I do know they've had some issues surrounding procurement processes, etc.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Minister Ellick, you would need to rise on a point of order or clarification if you do wish to speak.

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

Yes, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the question being asked, I do believe there is a failed procurement in this respect. But as you are aware Mr. Speaker, I was not on the island during these times. My Honourable friend was actually doing my role at the time Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

I thank the Honourable Ministers for that response and I ask, would it be possible that we can be given a written explanation please, as they have not been able to answer it in the House. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

I'm just rising to confirm that. I'm sure that could be provided to the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex. It may not come directly from myself, but I'm sure Minister Ellick can get his portfolio or Procurement if need be, to provide you with a response.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Next question please.

Question No. 3 - The Hon Ronald Coleman to ask the Hon Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs

The Speaker -

Honourable Ronald Coleman.

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs, tell this Council who owns the Castle Gardens and what portfolio is responsible for its maintenance, especially the roads network, to ensure that they are safe for pedestrians?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs.

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I thank my Honourable friend for his question. Mr. Speaker, SHG owns the Castle Gardens and ENRP manages the estate. My Honourable friend is well aware that the Castle Gardens road is not an adopted road, as he gets an update of road inspections

every month from the road section. He is also well aware of the policy relating to road maintenance. This has been covered in formal LegCo, Ministers Question Time, Select Committee only last week, and my In Scope program that was broadcast on SAMS Radio One, as well as being published in the Sentinel newspaper. My Honourable friend is also aware of the budget within the Road section, as he was one of the Members who approved the budget. The reality is, we cannot adopt all roads. It is simply, you can only do what you can afford. I get the impression that, sorry, I do believe that my Honourable friend should align himself with reality, as I get the impression he's in a fairy tale world, where there is a pot of money that has the same effect as the magic porridge pot. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Ronald Coleman.

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you Mr. Speaker, the Castle Gardens is not an adopted road, so who is responsible for the roads that is not adopted and how do they get fixed?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

Thank you Mr. Speaker. As explained in the policy Mr. Speaker, we have set, sorry, we have primary roads, secondary roads and tertiary roads. We do not have any money or cannot afford to deal with tertiary roads, Mr. Speaker. We only can work with the money that we have. That has already been explained to Elected Members in the forums that I have raised. I think my Honourable Member has raised that previously, and he should know, with most services on the island, you only can work with the money you have. So, once we get more money Mr. Speaker, if should we get more money and we can do other roads, we'd be happy to adopt them Mr. Speaker, but we can't do it without money. And he asked, who's responsible for this, it's still SHG's responsibility but again, we only can work with the money we got Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Councillor Coleman.

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you Mr. Speaker. So are we waiting for things to happen first before we take action, who carries out the safety assessments on these roads?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I'll repeat it again, Mr. Speaker. I said in there the Roads Inspector carry out roads on the roads. Yeah, but obviously he's not going to do non adopted roads and so forth. But SHG is responsible for all the roads, but they only can deal with what they can deal with. They can't deal with all other roads if they don't have the money to deal with these. I think this, would have been quite useful if my Honourable friend had attended the Select Committee hearing that we had, I think it was last week or week before last.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. May I just allow Councillor Thrower first of all, his light was on first.

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you. First, Mr. Speaker, I think this, there's a couple of different ways, I think just blanketly saying you can't do something because, so I would ask my honourable, the Honourable Minister, if it's possible that if we get the £500,000 tourism budget this year, which I think we've already said, that we're hopeful to get, whether we could potentially use money from that to fix the issues. Because I think what my Honourable friend Councillor Coleman is alluding to, is it's ok keep saying that there's no money for things like the Castle Gardens, but the Castle Gardens is also used as a footpath, and as a footpath, we are responsible for trip hazards, so all the roots poking out of it are definitely trip hazards. So who's responsible if somebody trips in there and we get sued for a lot more than it will cost to get fixed?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I'll just go back on that. I thank my Honourable friend for the question. Yes, SHG will be responsible but as you all know, we put in a bid to the UK Government for our reasonable needs. And I explained this previously that we are not getting our reasonable needs, and that's why we put in for, I think it was 16 million. Also in Select Committee we talk about various initiatives to draw down on the pipeline funding out of EDIP. So those are the things that we're trying to do. Wherever we can deal with things we will deal with it. You mentioned about TDP. That's not my responsibility. That's for the Minister beside me, Minister Brooks, so I can't just go and take his money. He needs to hear some sort of policy direction in relation to that. But also in terms of the budget, we all decide on the budget, and we allocate the budget, and you, all of you sitting around here, agree to that. So we only can work with what we've got. So some people might say, not all of them agree to it, but the majority, and this is what a democracy is, the majority. So again, Mr. Speaker, I only can deal with things with the money that is allocated to me. If I can find other innovative ways to do things, I will do these various things, but until I have the money, there's not much I can do. It's about prioritising things Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Councillor Thrower.

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Yes, I'd just like to come back on. Would the Honourable Minister please consider applying for an EDIP micro grant for fixing the road, or consider applying for an EDIP grant for fixing the road?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Yes, we've already done that Mr. Speaker, I put in, I think it was from micro projects in respect of bridges and roads previously. We had something, I think we had New Bridge to be clear, as well as Bishops Bridge, that we had micro projects for. The other areas we did not succeed. So we've put in another business case to look at roads as well as

bridges and drawing down on the pipeline, and hopefully that will come to steering committee at some stage.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. I think the question has been exhausted, answered. Next question please.

Question No. 4 - The Hon Karl Thrower to ask the Hon Minister for Environment Natural Resources & Planning

The Speaker -

The Honourable Karl Thrower.

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Environment and Natural Resources and Planning tell this Council what is the current situation regarding the development of the new land development control plan or LDCP?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister for Environment and Natural Resources and Planning.

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As my Honourable friend will know in the last formal sitting of Legislative Council, I mentioned that it is disappointing for me that the Land Development Control Plan, or the final version of the Land Development Control Plan, will not be achieved by the time that we are dissolved in, by June this year. So I just wanted to repeat that because my friend is aware of that. So Mr. Speaker, a new Land Development Control Plan is being developed, and this work is being led by the Head of Planning and Building Control. The officer has progressed some of the background work required to begin drafting of a new plan. The work that has been undertaken thus far is to review the draft plan that was initially drafted by a working group a few years ago, as my memory serves me correctly, it was in 2022 and the lead officer has held discussions with portfolio directors and has undertaken site visits. An internal stakeholder workshops across St Helena government portfolios have been held towards the development of an issues and options paper, to inform the planning strategy for the plan and of course, Mr. Speaker, this needs to be in alignment with St Helena Government strategic policy process. The other work that has been undertaken is work has been undertaken with the GIS section on baseline information required to inform the development of the options. Mr. Speaker, I just like to highlight that the previous and the current Head of Planning and Building Control have recommended that the new LDCP be started again but this does not mean, as I think I mentioned in a previous formal LegCo, this does not mean that some of the work that was undertaken a few years ago in drafting that plan, cannot be used as part of this process. So I want, don't want Members to think, or the public to think that work that has been undertaken is no longer on the table for consideration. So be part of that. The preparation of an options plan is currently underway for consultation with the public by early May 2025, which is designed to secure public feedback towards the overarching planning strategy for the plan. Whilst a timetable has been mapped out by the lead officer for the completion of the plan by the end of 25/26, to include the requirements of St Helena Government's strategic policy process and the statutory requirements for the establishment and adoption of a development plan under the Land Development Control Ordinance, even with best of intentions, some delay may be experienced during this period. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much Honourable Member. Next question please.

Question No. 5 - The Hon Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Hon Chief Minister

The Speaker -

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister tell this House why there was such a long period between the dissolution of Legislative Council and the upcoming General Election?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank the Honourable Doctor Corinda Essex for the question. Mr Speaker, if I may, I would like to quote from Section 78 (2) of the Saint Helena Ascension and Tristan de Cunha Constitution Order 2009, as amended in 2021, which states that there shall be a General Election of the Elected Members of the Legislative Council at such time being not less than six weeks nor more than three months after the date of every dissolution of the Council, as the Governor appoints (a) acting in accordance with the advice of the Chief Minister, or (b), acting in his or her discretion, if the office of Chief Minister is vacant or the Chief Minister gives no such advice within seven days after the date of the dissolution. Mr. Speaker, we are therefore well within the time frame permitted by the Constitution where there will be a period of eight and a half weeks between the proposed dissolution of Council on 30th of June, 2025 and the date a poll will take place, if one is required, that being the third of September, 2025. This time frame is less than that for two of the three most recent general elections. For information, Mr. Speaker in 2013 Legislative Council was dissolved on 19 April, with the general election taking place on 17th of July, which was a period of 12 and a half weeks between dissolution and polling day. In 2017 Council was dissolved on 20th of May. The election took place on 12 July, which was a period of seven and a half weeks after dissolution. And in 2021 Council was dissolved on second of August, with the election taking place on 13th of October, a period of nine and a half weeks after dissolution. Turning back to this year's general election, in the event that only 12 valid nominations were to be received on Nomination Day, which will be on the 20th of August, those candidates would be duly elected to serve the members, serve as members of the St Helena Legislative Council. Should such occur there would have been just six and a half weeks between the dissolution of Council and those candidates being elected. Persons who wish to stand for election to Council can make their intention known publicly at any time. However, they would only officially become a candidate on the day that the Legislative Council is dissolved, so we need to allow a reasonable period of time for campaigning to take place prior to Nomination Day. This period of time also enables registered voters to consider who they might wish to support or sponsor for election to Council. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Chief Minister, for that reply. Given the number of critical issues that are facing St Helena at this point in time, and the limited time that we have for actually getting these over the line, what is the constitutional position if there was a need to, in fact, postpone the dissolution of Council to enable key activities to be concluded before the Council is dissolved, or indeed to shorten the purdah period so that a newly elected Council would be able to start addressing these issues a few weeks in advance of the current proposed time?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, obviously, that's a bit of a technical question, and I've called on Mrs. Carol Henry, who knows this at the back of her hand, if I can put it that way. So, she said about the four-year period since the date of the elections. So, the latest date we could dissolve Council, I think from memory, is the 25th of October, if it was required to do so. I know we are, as you rightly said, in critical times, but I suppose when we think back to the last four years, we probably thought we were in critical times there as well. So, things have obviously changed. The world climate has changed quite predominantly but let's hope that the number of things that we would hope to get some direction of can happen by the dissolution date of 30th of June, because I have to admit that standing for General Elections for the first time in the last four years, I also see it as being important for any new Council that might be elected, to be given adequate time before, as you well know, the budgets have to be approved around about November, if I can put it that way. November is also generally when the Joint Ministerial Council meetings happen. So, part of the reason of trying to go as early as we possibly could, I have said this before, I think, in this Honourable House, is to allow people to have some time to embed themselves into the ministerial form of government. So that is the reason. But I do understand and take on board what you said about the critical decisions that need to be taken. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Next question please.

Question No. 6 - The Hon Robert Midwinter to ask the Hon Minister for Health & Social Care:

The Speaker -

The Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care tell this Council if his portfolio will consider undertaking a social impact assessment, which focuses on the use of mobile phones by young children on the island, particularly from a safeguarding perspective, and if he will make a statement in this respect?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care.

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank my Honourable Member for this important and time sensitive question, and for providing members the opportunity to debate the current situation and potential next steps. I would like to just say at the outset that this is an island wide discussion and will only be resolved and supported with island wide solutions that we all must participate in. It is about protecting our children. However, before I continue, I would like to define our focus on the term young children. For this answer, I am referring to ages five to 12, which encompass two critical development stages, early childhood, which is from five to eight year old, where children are more vulnerable to inappropriate content and limited critical thinking skills and pre-adolescence, nine to 12, where emerging independence online brings much higher risk of cyber bullying and grooming. Whilst the intent to conduct a localised social impact assessment is commendable and arguably a logical move, there are several practical constraints and recognised areas we must acknowledge that will have a bearing on a feasible outcome. They include the population limitations. With only 4000 people, a localised study could be statistically unreliable, especially if we drill down into the subsets suggested; every one or two reported cases could represent a significant percentage in specific areas, skewing results and potential conclusions. Global evidence already exists. International research, such as Ofcom's findings, that 37% of children aged eight to 17 face cyber bullying, and UNESCO's data showing one in 20 are contacted by strangers online, provides robust insights. The risks are universal and not unique to St Helena. Local strategies already informed by such findings aim, are aimed to support decision making. Rapid technology changes, such as platforms like Tiktok, evolve faster than local studies can track. Global Research can get a real time trends more efficiently. Recent internet access are higher speed, for the arguments sake of some people, unlimited internet roll out in October 2023 means we lack a baseline data for comparison. A local SIA now would offer limited, actionable outputs. Suggested alternatives to a social impact assessment, which we are already using in a number of formats, that has been reviewed and in some cases adapted and adopted to local concepts is to use evidence based steps, such as adapting proven frameworks for St Helena, integrating safeguarding tools into PSHE lessons and Police led workshops, leveraging the current and existing safeguarding efforts such as exploitation training that has been ran in schools for the last three years covering online risks. This includes Police education programs and campaigns on safe, mobile use and image sharing dangers; continue and enhance the multi-agency monitoring group, through the Safeguarding Board, where local anomalies are trapped across agencies, and I think this is an important element that we're trying to develop in the safeguarding more effectively now, it's always been there. This targets known local risks without duplicating global trends. And of course, the Safeguarding Board has just recently undergone structural changes, and now is overseen by a qualified independent member, who all Members in this House know, with qualified members supporting her here. The reconstruction of the Safeguarding Board will support focus areas, such as those mentioned, to deliver multi agency responses and, importantly, information gathering. All of the areas mentioned have continued room for improvement and frequency and delivery, with programs often limited by significant shortages in various agencies. I must point that out, because that is a factor that is holding us back on some of these commitments. To conclude, Mr. Speaker, it is my assessment that a full social impact assessment may not be proven now based on my remarks, but it should be noted for future consideration, as we all adapt to the significant advantages this technology brings. However, we are all well aware of the significant areas of global concerns, from cyber bullying fraud to growing trends of anxiety related to online usage, for which I know my Honourable friend is seeking to highlight and help to address. It is also wise to be aware that no matter their commitment, most governments are playing catch up with the relentless pace of daily changes in new technologies, scams and new platforms available. The approach currently being undertaken by the portfolio in conjunction with the Safeguarding Board, is to balance urgency

or pragmatism, ensuring limited resources are focused on real time child safety without duplicating existing ongoing research. However, I'd just like to conclude that I see where my Honourable friend is coming from with this. It is important that we stay close to what is happening on the island and also looking at what's happening internationally. There could be a difference, a slight difference, but there is loads of international research that we can use to guide us, given that it is real time and up to date, which is important in this sphere, unlike some other spheres of work. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much Honourable Member. Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I really would like to thank the Honourable Minister for his very open and candid response to my question. Mr. Speaker, there is indeed growing impetus and interest in this subject matter in the UK, and this has, this interest has now extended to our island. This has been fuelled by a mini-series recently released on Netflix called 'Adolescents' by Stephen Graham and Christine Cremonesi, which is about the growing problem in misogyny carried out by young men influenced by what they see online. As was noted by UK MP Anneliese Midgely during a recent session of Prime Minister's Question Time, this mini-series highlights online male radicalisation and violence against girls, and there are calls by the makers for it to be shown in Parliament and also Schools, in order to spark change. So Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Honourable Minister if he has seen this mini-series, and also if, in the absence of a social impact assessment, he and his Ministerial colleagues would similarly support having such a collective campaign here in St Helena, aimed at countering toxic misogyny early, addressing cyber bullying and giving young men in particular the role models they deserve.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure what answer I should provide to this, but no, I haven't seen the series, and I will endeavour to do so. I can assure the Honourable Member that some of the things that he have mentioned will all be incorporated in our overall planned way forward, because they are only small parts of what is a much larger problem to both individuals and to those who are like my Honourable Member mentioned, are using some of this to, as a form of baseline for what they think should be the right thing to do. As for positive role models, my Honourable friend, I can't provide that by myself, so I think that's something we have to do as a community as well, as I mentioned in the first sentence of my answer to you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much Honourable Member. Councillor Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to, it's an interesting set of circumstances we're in on St Helena, although I agree a local study would have issues with skewed results, as the Minister said, and there is a lot of global data now going into this issue, there are aspects of this situation that are unique to us. We essentially went from late 90s internet to something much more modern overnight without learning a lot of the lessons that most countries learned in Italy the hard way

along the way. Now some that might be an advantage for us. There are lessons we can learn from them, but I want to know how this sort of radical step change that we've had and may go through again, should we ever get fibre to the home sorted, how that can be factored into the safeguarding outreach that's going ahead with this kind of work?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much.

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I like to thank the Honourable Member for a prudent question, because this is something I had to actually go over in my head while trying to answer this question. The whole community has just went through a whole change, which actually, almost if we look at it from a social impact study parameter, would actually dismember a social impact study, because I have no comparable data. The community as parents, children, and all of us went through the change together. There is, there will be that particular gap and that particular hole. And the only way I can see that we probably may have to, or we may have to look at some of the answers to help us with this before we actually go into the pitfalls, is to monitor other small communities, or have a look at other small islands that have just went through very similar processes. But I'll leave it as that, Mr. Speaker, because I have no evidence to support me with anything further, but I think that would probably be another area for my team to have an investigation on. And the only other thing I'd like to say outside of that is that some of our team members here are in contact locally daily, in some cases, with professional members in UK HSA, etc., to ensure that we are trying to practice at the with the latest statistics and the latest things known to us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Think I can allow a further question. Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister inform this House as to whether in this outreach program that Safeguarding is developing in relation to the use of mobile phones, they're also looking at issues relating to mental health and self-harm?

The Speaker -

Okay, thank you very much. Honourable Minister for Health.

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Thank you and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for my question. And hence, like I said much earlier, it is very hard to drill down on specific areas, because it would seem that even in a general globalisation input, we are still at early stages with some of the harm this is currently doing in terms of mental health. There is, you know, case studies up and down various countries about the use of online, the time people are online. There was a massive study, I think, that I read the parameters to while once, while answering this question done and looking at how it is infecting children below the age of 12 at a far higher capacity than others. So yes, I will definitely, that will be entertained in part of what we are trying to do my Honourable friend and like I say, it is a hugely complex situation where we have limited data, we have just moved over. But also, when you read some of these case studies, the world is also in the middle of trying to play catch up and trying to put in parameters. At the same time, we have to also be open to human rights in the freedoms that exist under those charters. So, it is a balance, a very delicate balancing act. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. I think we need some further questions? Councillor Karl Thrower. I thought the question had been answered, actually, but go ahead.

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So okay, I think it's very important that obviously, Mr. Speaker, the Communications Ordinance, or the draft Communication Ordinance 2025 has just been released for public consultation. However, I will say one area it is very light on is exactly what we're talking about. Have the Honourable Minister liaised with the people who are currently doing the Communications Ordinance to see if the Communications Ordinance can also be strengthened in this regard?

The Speaker -

Okay, thank you. The Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Thank you Mr. Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. I will limit my answer, because a lot of it would be out of my scope. The liaison of, there could be elements which could include, be included in that ordinance to strengthen it, potentially. The reason it is going out now to public consultation, I think that's the perfect time to capture that. I will endeavour to see if it can be, because we all know that the particular Communications Ordinance holds its own complications. And then to try and scope into that ordinance, some of these far more difficult areas to deal with, especially when it comes to limitations, etc., may prove to be difficult under one system, but what we could look at is like my Honourable Member is suggesting, is that we have a particular point or phrase in there, which then relates to the drilled down policy from my particular team. So, I thank the Honourable Member for that suggestion.

The Speaker -

Okay, thank you very much. Honourable Councillor Gillian Brooks.

The Hon. Gillian Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and Minister. That was a really detailed response. Thank you for that. I just want a quick question, to say, in all the good work that is being done, is there a lot of parent or guardian interaction, or are there lots of plan or plans to have more parent and guardian interaction so you get the support that you need as well?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank my Honourable friend, for asking another very important question. And I'm going to be quite candid about my response, because we as a service can put on as much as we want. If it's about parents up taking and understanding and again, this is part of the communication we should be putting out, the important need for them to get involved with these particular issues. The stuff that happens online these days when you start to read some of these reports are absolute criminal and it could be happening to your child while you're watching TV and they're sitting right next to you. That's such an important and powerful point that you need to know. No longer the physical barriers that protect our children are in place,

and we need to be cognizant of this right now. We are also in the middle of learning what this is like I said earlier, and I think there should be, and I will endeavour to engage with our teams through both education and community outputs. We do have a new health promoter that is coming up, coming shortly. This is also on her agenda as well. So, we need to do more, potentially more public awareness but as for the engagement, this is the opportunity for me to say that we really need to engage more with this. We need to make time to engage with this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Look like we've exhausted that. Next question please.

Question No. 7 - The Hon Andrew Turner to ask the Hon Minister for Environment Natural Resources & Planning:

The Speaker -

The Honourable Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Planning tell this Council, based on the recent attendance of Ministers at a number of climate change conferences overseas, what initiatives have been discussed that could benefit St Helena and what are the plans to implement them?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Planning.

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, Mr. Speaker, I note that the question talks about recent attendance of Ministers, and Mr. Speaker would be totally inappropriate for me to try to respond to, on behalf of another Minister. So Mr. Speaker, I attended the UN Climate Change Conference COP28 in Dubai in November 2023 and the UN Climate Change Conference. COP29 in Baku in November 2024. The ExPo 2020 which was a site for COP28 insisted of blue and green zones. These zones covered a huge area, which took a while to navigate to enable me, the representative for St Helena, to locate the relevant pavilions. Furthermore, the conflicting timings of events restricted the number of events that could be attended, which is disappointing for St Helena. Due to our financial constraints, it is likely that we lost good networking, or indeed financial opportunities. Most countries, who include British Overseas Territories, are in the financial position to send a delegation so that their countries or islands can be better represented. Unfortunately, St Helena does not have the luxury. The Climate Action Innovation Hub was located approximately 30 minutes' drive from the ExPo, dependent on traffic, which added to the difficulty and made it impossible to attend all of the events that I was interested in. Cop 29 was on a much smaller scale. The delegations' pavilions in the blue zone were all in the same location, which made it easier to get around, but networking was more challenging due to the limited space available. As the majority of Elected Members have attended conferences over the last three years, we will be well aware that attendance at these events creates networking opportunities. It provides the opportunity to interact with various individuals, such as national delegates, civil societies and experts. It is not just about being physically present. It's about actively engaging, learning and seizing opportunities. Attending and participating in conferences can also significantly increase the global awareness of St Helena, its profile and attractiveness for funding opportunities. This is of vital importance,

bearing in mind that we are a relatively new destination with lots to offer and celebrate in terms of our environmental agenda, which is by far a primary attraction for more of our existing visitors. It is therefore essential that we continue on our journey to develop by being mindful of our environmental footprint. Mr. Speaker, my key aim when attending such events is to seize the opportunities presented to showcase the work that St Helena has undertaken, in respect of adaptation to and mitigation against, in the impact of climate change. Hence, I participated as a speaker and panellist for both conferences. At COP28 I had the opportunity to attend a meeting with Minister Stewart, Minister of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. At this meeting, the Minister stressed that the UK was the only developed country to have drastically cut its carbon emissions and is on track to meet its target of reaching net zero by 2050. He acknowledged the ongoing work within the Overseas Territories to lower the carbon emissions, and therefore positively contributing to this goal. As Overseas Territories are unable to access internal international funds, such as the loss and damage fund, a request was made to Minister Stewart for a dedicated Overseas Territories climate fund to cover costs and damage climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience. It was indicated to him that this would be a huge benefit to the Overseas Territories, as it enables them to rebuild infrastructure that has been damaged due to flooding or the loss of revenue resulting from agricultural crops being destroyed due to drought. A meeting was also arranged with representatives from expertise France, who manages the Green Overseas program, funded by the EU EDF 11 program, and of course, majority of the members had the opportunity to meet representatives from enterprise funds when they were on island last year. St Helena has been successful in obtaining financial support from this fund to undertake the provision of consultancy services for the reform of St Helena energy regulatory framework and unit utility license. This opportunity has enabled us to secure funding from other sources, which is if not successful, would have been sourced from an already stretched Economic Development Investment Program fund. Finally, having the opportunity to attend COP 29 gave me the chance to have a short bilateral with Minister Mary Craig. This was of real importance when reflecting back, as on her return to London, she had to cancel the bilateral schedule with the Chief Minister and myself, due to parliamentary business taking priority. In this bilateral, I was able to acknowledge the support, I was able to acknowledge the support HMG has provided to St Helena and was looking forward to working with the new government. Discussions included the process of taking forward the Overseas Territories, biodiversity strategy, the significance of continuance of funding streams available to the Overseas Territories to include Darwin Blue Belt and the Integrated Security fund. The Overseas Territories request for a dedicated overseas territories climate finance change fund, the impact of the pathogens on the cloud forest restoration project, and a challenge in finding additional and ongoing funding to enable much needed work to carry on, enhancing the positive progress that has been made with the project funding to date, for example, the Marine protective area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much Honourable Member. Honourable Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Honourable Minister for what is I've come to expect as a very detailed and very informative response. I also, I think, therefore, owe you an apology, because I'd assumed that obviously, if other Ministers attended conferences that would be relevant to your portfolio, there'd be some sort of information passed on there. But I take the Minister's point. The climate change fund you mentioned in that, and I apologise I didn't get the full name of it, to prepare for the future damages of climate change, is that fund confirmed to be coming forward yet and if so, would we be looking to apply to it for adaptations

to our infrastructure? For example, the potential to improve the sea wall should sea levels start rising, when they start rising?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and as the, my Honourable friend will note that I mentioned the dedicated climate change fund at COP, when I attended the Cop 28 and also in my bilateral with Minister Craig, I mentioned again because, unfortunately, it hasn't, it hasn't happened yet. And as I also mentioned that, you know, Overseas Territories do have, do have difficulty in accessing, we are not eligible to accessing international funding streams. So hence the reason we ask for a dedicated fund for the Overseas Territories, so then we will be able to tap into it. And as I probably have said on many occasions when I talk about the blue belt program, how Saint Helena has been so successful in obtaining funding from the Blue Belt fund and without that fund, we'll never be able to achieve what we've done for our marine environment. So, what the suggestion was to Minister Stewart, and also to Minister Craig is trying to set the fund up in a similar way that we all be able to access and then be able to address our issues.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Councillor Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that a lot of very interesting work has been started, and of course, we are now at that stage in our term where we're all sort of looking toward transitions now. So, I just wonder, is there any plan to ensure that these links can be kept post-election, obviously, presuming there may very well be different people sitting in some very different seats come a few months' time?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Councillor, Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

Yes, Mr. Speaker, that there is always a round table environmental Minister's meeting that's held quarterly, and I'm certain that this will continue. So, whoever is the Minister for Environment, no doubt that details will be passed on the facilitator and then ongoing discussions can take place.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Councillor Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Just one final one from me that sort of came out from the Minister's initial response. The Minister mentioned being conscious of our footprint when attending these events. I just wondered if we've ever considered, as a government, if we could introduce a carbon offset scheme to ensure that all sorts of attendances at these kinds of regular conferences, etc., could be considered to ensure that we are as a government, being as carbon neutral as possible.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much.

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

Of course, Mr. Speaker, that can be considered.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Next question please.

Question No. 8 - The Hon Gillian Brook to ask the Hon Chief Minister:

The Speaker -

The Honourable Gillian Brooks.

The Hon. Gillian Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister give this House an update on works at Rupert's Port to include money spent thus far?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. Rupert's cargo handling facilities are progressing, although there have been a number of issues and scope changes, resulting in project delays and cost escalations. The internal fit out of the port control, customs and bio security, (PCB) and the container freight station, (CFS) building are approximately 90% complete. Lifts have been installed and commissioned in both buildings and partitions; electrical cables and IT connections are nearing completion. It is expected that the internal work for these buildings will be completed next month, April 2025. Cubicles for consolidators are being procured, which will be erected on the ground floor of the CFS building, an electric forklift and pallet trucks for operations in the CFS building and yard are also being procured and should be on island in June 2025. Fencing of the CFS yard is complete, and fencing of the PCB yard is progressing. Additional fencing is required for the Break Bulk Yard and the perimeter of the facility for which an order will be placed shortly. The small buildings that is the public toilets and the stevedore buildings are now practically complete with only the installation of meter boards and door closers remaining, concreting work in the Break Bulk Yard are progressing well and are expected to be completed in July 2025. A contract has been signed for the civil works required prior to the new power supply cables being laid, Connect Saint Helena will be installing the cables once the preparatory works are complete. These works are expected to be completed in May 2025. Connect Saint Helena will also be installing the pipe work and pumps necessary to provide a fire suppression capability to the facility. These works are expected to be completed in July 2025. There are still some remaining packages to be procured, such as soft landscaping and signage. We anticipate that all works will be completed in October 2025, there will be a period of transition where the Safety, Security and Home Affairs Portfolio will transfer all their operations from Jamestown to Ruperts, which will need to be carefully timed between voyages of the MV Karoline. Options are currently being considered for interim arrangements to allow the facility to be operational ahead of the final completion of all elements. In total 4.958 million, so close to 5 million pounds, has been expended on the project. So far, from an approved budget of 6.464 million, the overall project budget has increased by 1.67 million since the original budget approval in 2020, this original budget did not include scope now incorporated such as concreting Break

Bulk Yard fire suppression, CFS handling equipment and the Break Bulk Yard cover area.
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Councillor Dr. Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr. Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that time is of an essence, I'm slightly surprised to hear that items needed have been identified but not yet ordered, is there any specific reason for this situation?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you to the Honourable Member for her question. I think I will make another statement, because I think it's important to recognise that in helping to address this question, and I know there's one that's going to come up similar, it is important to note that the Ruperts cargo handling facilities business case was approved in 2020 but site activity starting shortly after, with the first phase of clearance work. At the time, there was a desire for construction to commence quickly, ahead of finalised, detailed designs and a project manager being in place. Project management capacity has continued to be a challenge for this project, as well as the R2 project with a dedicated person only arriving in June 2024, after a series of short-term appointments, we are continuing to address our capacity issues. We now have a second EDIP project manager on Island, and we will soon be recruiting two more, including one dedicated to the new build prison. The Ruperts project predates the establishment of the program management office, PMO, and also the Ministerial system of government. We now have an established, robust governance structure which ensures a project executive, also known as the senior responsible owner, or SRO, is appointed. Project executives come from the portfolio for which the project is being delivered, and they are ultimately accountable for project delivery and performance. I've given that as an overview because I think, my Honourable Friend, that is half the reason sometimes that some of this is coming later than we'd like it to come, and which is added to the extended delays on this project, which I think we all know we'd like to see come to completion and fruition. We'd love to have seen that happen before we leave office. That's not exactly happening, but I do have so much, some more, some confidence that we are now having the persons we need on board with the now newly developed governance structure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

The Speaker -

Dr. Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr. Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Chief Minister and I do understand the background problems that have delayed the project. However, I still not cannot understand why, if it's been identified that, I think you said further fencing needs to be ordered, it can't be ordered. Now, that was my question. If there's an identification that something is needed, surely, within 24 hours, the process can be started. If it's got to go through procurement processes, those can be cut as short as possible, and the actual commencement of the ordering process can begin?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think what I've just, add to that there is a process this, as I've just said, the overall project budget has increased, and to be able to get additional funding, there is a process that needs to be followed. Steering Committee will need to then be consulted, which includes SHG, but also FCDO, I can tell you, with regards to the fencing that has now been ordered, but it does take process to be followed, because the project is continuously being delayed, is one part, but it's costing more and more money. And as you well know, as we spoke about to the Honourable Ronald Coleman, with regards to Roads, when we're overspending, if I can put it that way, on one particular project, it has negative impacts on all the rest in the pipeline. If I can put it that way, and we all know that there's a very, how can I say, we are trying to have the most productive and it's almost good, aspirational pipeline, but the more we overspend and the time, then we are obviously reducing our chances of achieving all the all the rest. So, I do take on board what you're saying, but because of the additional funding required, it is a process that needs to be followed.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Question from Councillor Karl Thrower.

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the statement that the Honourable Chief Minister has just given, would she be able to say just how much control the government have over these types of projects? Because it's just a repeat of the Maestro projects. It's just a repeat of false things that we just cover in other projects. We keep blaming the same things, but we don't seem to be fixing them for the next project, and my worry is the prison is going to end up going exactly the same way.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I hoped that I had said that we have made changes to the governance structure. A lot of these, and I don't wish to push blame, that's not what I'm saying, a lot of these projects we're talking about, Rupert's are all before the Ministerial form of government. So, the structure has had to change, and it's taken some time to do so. We've talked about capacity and capability also throughout the Public Service, not specifically talking to project management. But I think we've all raised concerns about stability in staffing. I can talk about Education. We are, at the moment, looking to bring on a project manager to be the lead on the Education Primary reorganization, for instance. But the responsibility or the leadership will belong to the portfolio. I think one of the biggest problems we've had with Rupert's is that it was never handed over, whether as a senior, responsible officer coming who have the expertise in those fields, and again, not to be pushing blame. But we all know that we've only recently, what's the word employed, an expert Harbor Master, and all those key people that we need who would have the expertise as to what we would need to be internationally qualified and certified as a port. So, if I can use that as examples, I'm not suggesting, though, Honourable Karl Thrower that it's all fixed, because I don't know what's around the corner tomorrow, but consistency and stability within our staffing is definitely having an impact on our ability to move everything forward, on attraction, but also it needs to be ownership of the lead portfolios to take it forward, because they have the expertise on how things should move. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. I thought the question had been answered already. If I just, Honourable Gillian Brooks?

The Hon. Gillian Brooks -

No, I don't have a question Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the Chief Minister for her detailed responses to my question.

The Speaker -

Okay, thank you very much. Next question please.

Question No. 9 - The Hon Ronald Coleman to ask the Hon Minister for Treasury and Economic Development:

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Ronald Coleman.

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development tell this Council, when St Helena experience rough seas, what is the cost to St Helena Government, if any, when they are delays in discharging cargo or fuel, and if so, how is this cost recovered?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. The Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development, please.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank Ronald Coleman for his, Honourable Councillor Ronald Coleman, sorry, for his question, as I feel the public would be interested to know my answer. So, Mr. Speaker, when there is a delay in discharge of cargo from the MV Karolina due to rough seas, SHG should not be subject to demurrage charges. So that's a line drawn in the sand there. And because of that, and that is because Mr. Speaker, an act six of the ocean freight service agreement between SHG and MACs, or the shipping service, as we know, stipulates that the supplier so ensure it has sufficient flexibility to vary the freight service to meet weather delays or urgent island needs, and the island should not be subject to the demurrage charges for delays outside its control. So, I hope that makes it very clear in terms of the MV Karolina, with regards to the fuel shipment. SHG will be charged demurrage costs if the actual unloading time in the port exceeds the allowed time under the agreement at a rate of 11,000 US, dollars per day pro-rata. So, the time that is allowed within agreement is 36 hours, and it is usually enough time for unloading of fuel once the vessel and the agent has confirmed that they're ready to commence off-loading. It is possible that the vessel can arrive ahead of the requested delivery date for their own convenience, which did incur, Mr. Speaker sorry, which does not incur any demurrage charges, cost to SHG. So, this did occur last month, Mr. Speaker, when the ship was anchored in harbour. However, as I said, it arrived early than was expected or was requested. So therefore SHG was not charged any demurrage charges. So yes, and then, as scheduled, when they were ready to offload, commencing did offload on the requested date and in the requested time allowed. So, it was offloaded within the 36 hours. Mr. Speaker, the last part of the question is, how these costs are recovered. As I said, there are no demurrage charges in terms of the MV Karolina unless it's outside of our control. Sorry, outside of our control. But if there is delays for some reason, for the offloading of fuel that will be the

demurrage charges will be charged to the BFI. So, I think you probably are not going to, sort of, I'm not going to give an answer and how that will be distributed. It could be that that is divvied up into the fuel amount, or it could be that that is recovered some other way, but that is the procedures that would happen in that event. Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. I think this might be a time - there's still another six questions to go, and then two motions after that, and the adjournment debate, - might be an opportune time for an appropriate time to have lunch. Thank you very much, and we will come back at in an hour's time. So, the clock up there says quarter past 12. Can we come back at quarter past one? Thank you very much.

Council Adjourned

Council Resumed

The Speaker -

So, we resume business. Hope everybody got themselves renourished up because we were all feeling a bit hungry before. Next item of business please.

Question No. 10 - The Hon Karl Thrower to ask the Hon Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs:

The Speaker -

The Honourable Karl Thrower.

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs, outline to this Council the specific types of infractions the proposed fixed penalty notice system is intended to cover and how the system will ensure fairness and consistency in its application?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank my Honourable friend for the question. Currently the draft regulations, states that a fixed penalty notice may be issued in respect off an offense pursuant to: section three (one) of the Criminal Damage Ordinance, 1979; section one (one) of the Theft Act 1968; section 71 of the Public Order Ordinance; section six, (two) of the Summary Offenses Ordinance; section 12(2) of the Summary Offenses Ordinance; section 76 (3) of the Environmental Protection Ordinance 2016; regulation six of the local Traffic Regulations 1985; section seven, (one) of the Fisheries Ordinance 2021; section 73 (one) of the Fisheries Ordinance 2021; section 21 of the Environmental Protection Ordinance 2016; section 109 of the Environmental Protection Ordinance 2016; section 109 of the Environmental Protection ordinance 2016; section 71 (3) of the Fisheries Ordinance 2021, section 72 (2) of the Fisheries Ordinance 2021, section 72 (4) of the Fisheries Ordinance 2021, section 74 (1) of the Fisheries Ordinance 2021, section 75 of the Fisheries Ordinance 2021, section 81 (6) of the Environmental Protection Ordinance 2016. The intention is to introduce further minor offenses

to the list, but we need to start somewhere. This is a priority for me and this government, as it will stop the criminalisation of people from misdemeanours but at the same time deter people from committing such acts. Unfortunately, due to capacity and capability constraints we can't seem to move quickly enough on this matter. As my Honourable colleague may be aware, the Criminal Justice Fixed Penalties Regulations have already been drafted and discussed at ExCo almost two years ago. My Honourable friend will be aware that I've raised the matter with the former AG and the Acting AG at formal LegCo meetings about the time it is taken for the AG's office to complete this matter. Both gave me reassurance that the matter would be dealt with. I've also raised this with the new AG, and again, I've been given assurance that this will be dealt with. I am still awaiting. The draft regulations specify the form in which the penalty notice is to be issued, the manner in which a penalty is to be paid and the offense for which a fixed penalty notice may be issued. In regards to how the system will ensure fairness and consistency in its application, there's a set criteria for the issue of a fixed penalty notice which details how they should be applied. For example, the Director of Police can only amend any criteria after consultation with approval from the Attorney General, and any amendment would have to be published by notice. We have fixed penalty notices issued in relation to a matter which falls under the responsibility of any department of government. The Director of the Department of Government must, after consultation with the Director of Police, cause a notice to be published in the Gazette specifying the criteria to be applied to the use of the fixed penalty notices. A notice specified in criteria to be applied to the use of fixed penalty notice must also be approved by Attorney General prior to the publication of notices. I take it that you wish to ensure that officers apply their fixed penalty notices fairly by only applying to some and not others. Obviously, officers need to be trained in this field, but they are also subjected to discipline codes, and if they're not dealing with matters in an ethical matter, then persons who feel that they have been unfairly treated can complain and their matters will be dealt with accordingly. I hope this addresses your question.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Karl Thrower.

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Yeah, it does. I'd like to thank my Honourable colleague, for that answer. It was extremely detailed, and now I've just got one follow on question with it, which is actually from a constituent. What's the route of the funds within SHG or within the Public Service once they receive, where will any fines go to? Will they go into the consolidated fund or to another fund?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Jeffery Ellick -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, they will go back to the central funds. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Next question please.

Question No. 11 - The Hon Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Hon Chief Minister:

The Speaker -

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister tell this House why the electrical cabling at Rupert's cargo handling facility has had to be removed and replaced?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

I would like to first thank the Honourable Member for her question. At the beginning of the project temporary electricity supplies were installed by Connect Saint Helena to both the port control, customs and biosecurity, PCB and the container freight station (CFS) sites, to provide power during construction activities. I do think the Members are loving me getting all these acronyms today, so I do apologize. The PCB building is currently being served with a temporary supply from the transformer at the rear of the building. This supply is not sufficient for the final operational load, which includes powering the building, reefer containers and yard lighting. A larger diameter cable is required to feed a new switch room to be constructed near the PCB building from the transformer. The brick bulk yard requirements will also be supplied from the same cable and switch room. Similarly, the temporary supply to the CFS building and yard does not have the capacity to meet operational requirements, especially as the intended use of the building has changed since the supply was installed. This site is fed from the transformer near the fisheries building, and the routing of the existing supply is not suitable for the larger cable now required. In consultation with Connect Saint Helena, a new route has been agreed, which requires some excavation works along the road edge and across the base of the ramp leading into the CFS yard. It is anticipated that the installation of the permanent supplies will be completed in May 2025. Regrettably, due to staff turnover and resource constraints, the requirement to replace and upgrade the power supply cables was not actioned as early as we would have liked. As a result, some additional civil works are required, which has increased the anticipated cost. And without going over what I gave as an overview before Honourable Corinda Essex, I think this comes back down to what we talked about, lack of governance structure and also capacity and capability and stability within our project management in the past. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you and I thank the Chief Minister for her response. What is the financial implication of the additional rewiring work?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The total cost of the permanent power supply installations to both sites is 110,000 pounds. This includes an element of additional Civil Works valued at approximately 35,000 pounds.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Can the Honourable Chief Minister also indicate what the cost of the temporary works that have had to be removed were please?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to admit to not having that with me here today, but that is something I'm prepared to follow up on and provide it to you, because I don't have that with me today.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Next question please.

Question No. 12 - The Hon Robert Midwinter to ask the Hon Minister for Treasury and Economic Development:

The Speaker -

Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development provide this Council with an update on the sale of plots at the Bottomwoods CDA since the new Property Purchase and Disposal Policy was approved and implemented in January of this year?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. So, Mr. Speaker, since the implementation of the Property Disposal and Purchase Policy 2024 that was approved in January of this year, I am pleased to provide an update in the sales of plots of Bottomwoods. So, the new policy, which provides for 60% discount to land value for first time buyers, intending to make St Helena their primary home, has been instrumental in generating interest in these plots and facilitating land ownership for local residents. As a result, Mr. Speaker, eight bids have been received for 10 plots that were advertised with all applicants being first time buyers, sorry. This positive response demonstrate the effectiveness of the policy in making land more accessible and affordable, particularly given the past challenges in disposing these plots. It also reflects the commitment that these individuals, to building their homes and establishing their futures on St Helena. Marketing of the remaining plots will continue with first time buyers being given preference in any open market tender process. This ensures that opportunities remains available for those seeking to make St Helena their primary home, whilst also encouraging sustainable development and investment in the local economy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the Honourable Minister for his response, which is very positive news. Noting there has been significant movement in the sale of plots since the new policy was put in place, which was invariable as a result of the significant first-time buyer discount being applied, in order to similarly stimulate private sector development, in particular by small supporting small businesses, I would simply ask the Honourable Minister if he will ensure that similar thinking is engaged by his portfolio in other areas, such as the rent and fees policy, which I raised in this House at Ministers Question Time on Tuesday.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Minister stated that there had been eight bids for plots, have any plots actually been sold to date?

The Speaker -

Yes, I think you were meant to answer the question of Honourable Midwinter. Would you go ahead and do that now then please?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I will first of all address Dr Essex's question and then come back to Councillor, Midwinter's.

The Speaker -

Okay.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Three of those plots are in the final stages of being, of the funds being transferred and agreements being signed, and the other five is going through the final process now. So just negotiating with the bidders on the other agreements and the transfer of payments. But I won't take, I won't stand here and obligate today that all eight will definitely be sold because you know, obviously when, during the negotiation periods, a bidder might choose to change their mind, or for any other reason, the plot doesn't get sold. But as my Honourable friend said, it is quite positive that we have already had eight bids for these plots since January, which is only in less than two months. So that is very positive. Now to go on to my Honourable friend Robert Midwinter's question, yes, we have already took the initiative, and in the policy, you will see that there is incentives for businesses that meet the objectives of the SEDS. So, there is rent reductions for certain businesses, and there is other incentives in form of tax reductions for certain businesses. So yes, we are taking that on board, and that's already incorporated in the 2024 policy. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Honourable Minister, please explain why the reductions for businesses are only for those businesses that are contributing to SEDS, because there are other

types of businesses that are badly needed on the island that also could benefit from the reductions?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question, for her question, sorry, do apologise. So, the SEDS, actually the requirements of SED is quite broad. It ranges from, like I said, anything from agricultural businesses to tourist sectors to hospitality sectors and so on. So, the idea of the SEDS is obviously to meet the Government's vision and objectives. And in the Government's vision and objective for talks about certain sectors and trying to encourage certain sectors, some of those sectors, which maybe isn't mentioned in there doesn't necessarily means that you wouldn't qualify. So, I would say, Mr. Speaker, for any businesses who are unsure whether they qualify or not, to please contact the team, and we can consider that on a case-by-case basis. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you. Is the Honourable Minister aware of whether or not crèches would meet the criteria?

The Speaker -

Thank you. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. It depends on what business case a crèche put through, or what are, what subjects, or what the crèche actually requires. It would all depends. For instance, if they wanted to move into a building, because they were going to be expanding and they were going to create, let's say, another five jobs, then it would because it's increasing the labour demand and increasing jobs on the island. So most likely it would, but as I said it, it all depends on the nature of the business and how the business want to expand or interact in terms of the policy. So, it's a bit hard to say whether they would pass the matrix, there is a matrix which we will take each business through, and if they pass the, or they qualify for that matrix, then they will be entitled to a discount. But it is a bit hard until we know exactly what the business is asking for. So that's why I said it will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Next question please.

Question No. 13 - The Hon Ronald Coleman to ask the Hon Minister for Treasury and Economic Development:

The Speaker -

The Honourable Ronald Coleman.

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development tell this Council what were the reasons for the St Helena Government terminating the contract with Maestro and what was the cost to the British and St Helena Government, if any?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. Mr. Speaker, a mutual drop hands settlement was agreed between SHG and Maestro in March 2024, where both parties were discharged of their respective obligations associated with the contract. Reasons for the St Helena Government terminating the contract with Maestro were complex and publicly reported in the St Helena Audit report. The full details are available in the audit report as I have said, Mr. Speaker, and factors identified by this report that contributed to the project failure were: SHG over promised bidders during the procurement with regards to coordinating local contractors, planning permissions and pole share agreements. Another factor that contributed to it was the invitations to tender didn't require a site visit before the contract was awarded. This means that the data being used by the contractor to plan the network was incomplete and in places flawed. So Mr. Speaker, if you just look at those very two situations that contributed to the failure of the project, in my opinion, these are very important and would suggest that a project will be hard to continue if these very important elements are not met. But Mr. Speaker, the report doesn't stop there. The report goes on to say that there was other contributing factors, and I will go through a few more as well Mr. Speaker, just for the general listening public. The threat of procurement related litigation limited communications with Maestro and the projects very early months that had a significant delayed in start. Issues with Sure providing access to ducts in Jamestown for assessment to inform potential use also contributed. Incomplete planning information, contributed to the difficulties presented by Maestro not undertaking a pre-tender site visit. So, as I said, one of the reasons at the very beginning is they weren't invited out here for a pre-tender site visit and lot of these issues could have been resolved in that pre-tender site visit. The governance arrangements and practices for the project did not provide adequate scope for controlling, directing and monitoring the project effectiveness. Maestro never produced the final project designs. And finally, Mr. Speaker, Maestro failed to provide the necessary instruments to assure, sorry, instruments of assurance that was required by SHG, and this was, talked about in form of a company guarantee and a performance fund. So Mr. Speaker, according to both SHG officers and Maestro, no other payments was made by either party beyond 1) a 508,733 payment that SHG reimbursed Maestro for the fibre optic cable, poles, tools and other materials they have purchased on behalf of SHG. And secondly, Mr. Speaker a payment of 170,000 in staff costs, including work on a network design. And this brings the total Mr. Speaker to 678,733 pounds that was spent on this project to date. And this money was funded out of the 1-million-pound contribution that the Economic Development Investment Program, so EDIP was contributing to the project. So Mr. Speaker, following the end of the contract, we prioritised connecting the cable to the on-island network, working with Sure South Atlantic and as everybody knows now, we achieved this in October 23, so we are making use of the cable. We have connected to the cable, and now we are developing a more robust legal regulatory framework for telecommunications and we have started the new Telecommunications Ordinance, and many of you will know that that only came out this week, advertising for public consultation. So, we are at the point now, with the ordinance have been drafted, it's been around the process internally, and now it's out for public consultation and the regulations are very closely followed behind that. As I speak, they are

nearing their final stages of drafting now. So Mr. Speaker, after the framework is established, we intend to make a decision on improving connectivity and in that decision, some key considerations will be considered, and that is a mixture of the current network and upgraded networks, new technology and improve licensing to whoever is the service provider. So, Mr Speaker, I would just like to add that the Audit report has now been cleared by all parties who is involved, and there will be a PAC live hearing, Miss Essex is nodding her head, so I am right, next Thursday, the third of April, and I would encourage all members of the public to read the report and to feedback to the PAC. I myself will look forward to PAC scrutiny of this report and for any recommendations from the PAC. So, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Councillor Coleman.

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Just to thank the Minister for that reply. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Councillor Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to check with the Minister what monitoring of fair access are we doing in the meantime, until the solutions that he alluded to were put in place?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

So, under the current license, it allows for certain monitoring to be done by the ECCC, and that group has been set up and is monitoring the network and the service provider, and it does, and the group, or the work, I'm not sure what actually they would call themselves, but the group will publish, when, I think, on a monthly basis, or however often, their findings from the ECCC meetings.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Councillor Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very glad to hear the ECCC is back in full working order. What I'd like to know then, Mr. Speaker is, if people are having issues that they believe the ECCC need to know about, are they contactable by the public and if so, how?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr. Speaker, before I answer my Honourable friend, supplementary question, I just need to correct myself. The ECCC published annually, not monthly.

The Speaker -

Okay, thank you.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

So yes, the report is done annually. Are they available? Can they? Yes, so the public can contact any member of the ECCC, I'm sure that we can do some promotion around to let the public know a contact point or who to contact within that organisation. I'm sorry, what was the second part of your question? Well, then yes, I've already answered your question. Thank you.

The Speaker -

All right. Thank you very much. Next question please.

Question No. 14 - The Hon Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Hon Chief Minister:

The Speaker -

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister tell this House what is St Helena Government's policy relating to employment of persons with disabilities?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As per Public Service, Code of Management and Equal Opportunities Policy, SHG undertakes to develop a working environment and provides conditions of employment that, as far as practicable, will offer people with physical, sensory and mental disabilities the opportunity to seek and maintain employment with SHG. In practical terms, this means focusing on a person's abilities rather than their disability, and making whatever adjustments are reasonable and practical in the workplace. Within the recruitment and selection procedures, it is specific. It specifically means short listing every disabled job applicant who meets the minimum job requirements. In this regard, our job advertisements make it clear that SHG accepts applications from people with disabilities, stating specifically that SHG positively accepts applications from all members of the community, regardless of age, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and will consider all applications on the basis of merit, assessed against the role profile and person specification. All appointments are subject to the successful candidate providing satisfactory clearances, which include a medical check, vetting DBS clearance and references. SHG reserves the right to have, I think that should have been vetting, and I think I said vetting. SHG reserves the right to have information provided on or with the application independently verified. Benefits are subject to change and may vary according to role. With that stated as part of the recruitment process, from the outset, we have to check if applicants require any reasonable adjustments for the interview process. Following offer of employment, their pre-employment medical checks ensure that the person is fit to work, and whether any reasonable adjustments would be needed in the workplace to accommodate them in the role. In practice, we are aware of a number of employees within our workforce who have either physical or mental disabilities, or both. In many of these cases, reasonable adjustments are made and reviewed to ensure that the employee is able to continue to work in their role with the relevant level of adjustment, support or changes to the role where feasible. If an existing employee becomes disabled whilst already in our employment, we consider all options to try and accommodate their condition or conditions. This may include adjustments in their existing role or redeployment into another suitable role. HR works closely

with line managers and employees to support their ability to continue working and make informed decisions around adjustments, etc., based on medical evidence which is provided by healthcare professionals. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Chief Minister, what you've said indicates the sort of broad parameters under which disabled people can be employed. But the fact remains is that if a disabled candidate, for example, one that has got a slight learning difficulty, not an extreme learning difficulty, but a slight learning difficulty, is competing for a post with individuals who have not got any form of learning difficulty, that disabled person is likely to be at a disadvantage. What measures are in place to try and obviate that situation?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sorry, I was obviously consulting one of the officers. So basically, it is based on those with the most experience and suitability for the job. But obviously, like you've just said, we would have to consider all the medical assessments that is brought into account as well. I am a little nervous to go further, because I'm no expert in this field, and I would rather, if necessary, if you wanted to dig deeper into the internal policies of how this is dealt with. I would encourage you to do so, because I would never want to be stating something from memory right now that then could lead me open to being challenged on what I've just said about persons with disabilities or having to have, obviously, to be accommodated in our workforce at the moment. So, I would rather leave it at that. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you. Given the current short staff situation on St Helena, it would be a great shame as there are members of the public who, in fact, are looking for work, and I do have evidence that there are such individuals, but who are not successful in gaining that work because they have disabilities. So, I think this is an area that needs further investigation and exploration. This is a matter that has been brought to my attention by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Was that a question? Do you want to respond to that?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Can I just respond? All I'll say is thank you for that, and I would just encourage you to have a conversation directly with our human rights team, or human rights, human resources team, because they would be better placed to be able to respond to that without obviously speaking if there's anything to do with data protection and employment law, but I would not be able to assist any further today. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Councillor Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Has the Honourable Chief Minister considered if introducing dedicated disability legislation would help ensure that both SHG the public and indeed employers at large, know their rights and responsibilities under the law in this area?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be absolutely honest here. We haven't considered it at the stage, and knowing that we've got three months remaining, there is no way I'm going to commit to putting that on the agenda for the remaining three months. I can see the AG giving a smile there, because I think we all know of the commitments that we've already got sitting on the desk at the AG's Chambers. So, it's not through lack of aspiration to do so, but I think we need to be realistic now that we've got three months remaining, and to commit to that here today, I would actually be making a commitment I couldn't keep. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Next question please.

Question No. 15 - The Hon Robert Midwinter to ask the Hon Minister for Treasury and Economic Development:

The Speaker -

The Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development give consideration to ensuring that, when fees and charges are set or reviewed by SHG, these are rounded off to avoid the need for small denominations of change, as opposed to simply applying a percentage uplift across the board?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and Mr. Speaker, I'll be honest, I am unclear from the question what rounding off means. At what level is being suggested, fees and charges should be round off, an example, to the nearest 10p or to the nearest pound. It could be the case that rounding off a fee, or charge, or charges up to the nearest pound would increase the cost for the public and businesses, particularly where there's regular occurring charges, for an example, a medical prescription. Further, Mr. Speaker, as the local community and businesses sector continue to utilise electronic means of payments, like local debit cards and online banking, the need for cash and small denominations of change will diminish. But Mr Speaker, I do give an undertaking here that this government can consider rounding off fees and charges in the future, but this will be done on a case-by-case basis. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the Honourable Minister for his response, because I'm more than happy to give some further clarification. Mr. Speaker, this question came about as a result of my last round of constituency meetings, and the comment was made in relation to bus fares. However, I subsequently attended the dentist and had a bill for £11.35. When I handed over a 20 pound note, it created difficulty producing change. This was apparently not an issue, I've spoken to the staff there, until the last increase was applied as a fixed percentage across the board. So Mr. Speaker, I am simply asking if some common sense can be applied the next time around.

The Speaker -

All right. Thank you very much. Next question, please, or was it the last question? Oh, I do beg your pardon. Councillor Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Just as a follow up question on that one Mr. Speaker, off course, is the Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development, that you can round down as well as round up?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr. Speaker, I'm well aware of that, but most likely round down will means that the government loses out. So it's just trying to right to find the right balances. I understand where my Honourable friend is coming from, in terms of small denominations of money and services having to have cash flow or change in their box all the time. But as I said, as we move into the future, hopefully more members of the public will utilise the bank's local debit cards and online banking, and that will eliminate some need for services to carry amount of cash flows. But as I said, the next time we consider rounding and next time we consider increasing fees and charges, we will look to round it off so it makes it easier for all services. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Nobody? Okay, next item of business, please.

6. Motions

Motion No. 1 - The Hon Minister for Treasury and Economic Development

THIRD SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (2024/25) BILL, 2024

The Speaker -

The Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Third Supplementary Appropriation, (2024/2025) Bill, 2025 be approved in principle and referred to the committee

of the whole Council. Mr. Speaker, I also formally confirm that this Bill is presented on a recommendation of the Governor, in accordance with section 73, (2) of the Constitution.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Is there a seconder? Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you Mr. Speaker I beg to second.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister Brooks, you may proceed.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the Third Supplementary Appropriation (24/25) Bill, 2025. Mr. Speaker, section 105 of the Constitution provides that, I think I should know this off by heart now Mr. Speaker, the amount of times I've said it, if in the course of any financial year, it is found that the amount appropriated for any purpose is insufficient, or that the need has arisen for expenditure for a purpose for which no amount has been appropriated, a supplementary estimate showing the sum required shall be laid before Legislative Council. Mr. Speaker, this supplementary appropriation bill is presented today, following the work undertaken by portfolios in conjunction with Treasury, to estimate the year end term of revenue and expenditure for 24/25 financial year. The Bill seeks to authorise additional recurrent expenditure of 1,392,000 pounds, and capital expenditure of 31,000 pounds. Mr. Speaker, the supplementary appropriation estimates outlined additional expenditure requests, and we will go through these in detail if it is agreed to proceed to committee stages. Mr. Speaker, this supplementary appropriation is planned to be funded through existing budget allocations and a withdrawal from the consolidated fund. And I can advise that the appropriation is proposed to be funded by: 1) a withdrawal from Head 15, Safety, Security and Home Affairs, of a sum of 40,000 pounds; a reallocation of capital appropriation to recurrent on Head 15, Safety, Security and Home Affairs, that's 40,000 pounds; on Head 19, Economic Development, 325,000 pounds; and Head 23 Health and Social Care, 55,000 pounds. Also Mr. Speaker, a withdrawal from the ring fence funding under Head 17 Treasury of 147,000 pounds. Finally, Mr. Speaker, it is proposed that there should be a withdraw from the consolidated general reserves of 816,000 pounds. Mr. Speaker, the balance in the general reserve at the beginning of the financial year was around 4.5 million pounds. With the two supplementary appropriations approved in August and December of 2024, the special warrant approved earlier this month and proposed third supplementary being considered here today, Mr. Speaker, the estimated balance in the general reserve of a consolidated fund at the year end of this financial year, is estimated to be 1.9 million pounds. This estimated year end reserve balance is substantially below the minimum balance of 5 million pounds we would expect to be held in our reserves. It significantly reduce SHG's ability to respond to external financial shocks and other urgent and unforeseen expenditure. Litigation expenditure is also covered by the general reserve and any future litigation payments has to be met by this fund. Mr. Speaker, it should not be assumed that the UK Government will fund any compensation for SHG. With all that being said, Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the public finances are under considerable strain, and it is important for all parties to work together to ensure financial controls are working effectively and that appropriate measures are in place to ensure that our limited resources are used the best as they can be. Mr. Speaker, I recommend to this house that the Bill is now referred to the Committee stage. I beg to move.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. I put the question that the Third Supplementary Appropriation, (2024/25) Bill, 2024 be approved in principle and referred to a committee of the whole Council. The question is open for debate. Anyone wishing to speak to the principals and not the details of the bill? Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Mr. Speaker, before speaking to the principles of the Bill, which I do wish to do as well, there's a disparity between what's contained in the explanatory note and what was said by the Honourable Minister, so can we please have clarification as to which is the correct version? Can that be announced publicly please, what is the correct version?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr. Speaker, can I just give clarity?

The Speaker -

Yes, please.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

The amount that I read out, 816,000 pounds is the amount that that is being asked to be withdrawn from the consolidated fund. The amount in this, is incorrect I'm afraid but as the title at the top said on the explanation note, this does not form part of the ordinance. So, I think we just to make it clear, this figure in here should be 816,000 pounds.

The Speaker -

816,000 pounds. Councillor Dr Essex you, that makes it clear?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Can we please have verification that all the other figures contained within the explanatory note are correct?

The Speaker -

Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am just running through them quickly now Mr. Speaker. Yes Mr. Speaker, 1,392,000 from the recurrent expenditure, 31,000 from capital expenditure, and withdrawn on the consolidated fund, general reserve of the consolidated fund of 816,000. So those are the figures we are working with Mr. Speaker.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

With respect Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister has not confirmed that the other amounts, whether the other amounts in the second paragraph of the explanatory note are correct or not.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Honourable Minister.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr. Speaker, may I make a suggestion and we proceed into committee stages where any clarification can be given in that stage by the Deputy Financial Secretary?

The Speaker -

I'm sure that that can be done. When we do get to committee stage, we are supposed to now be open to debate before we get to that stage. So, I would ask if anybody wishes to say anything at all before we get to the Committee stage? Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated earlier, I do wish to speak to the principles of the Bill, and it is extremely concerning that we have had three supplementary appropriations within this financial year, and also the size of the current one that we are facing. And although I know that when we're at committee stage, the explanations will be provided, at the same time it serves to emphasise the problems the St Helena Government is facing in trying to meet its commitments, deliver its services and do all that is supposed to do within a budget that we, frankly, all know from the outset, is not really adequate to address everything that we need to try to address. And although I know that we do communicate that quite forcefully to UK Government, and as I mentioned previously, at the moment, we have a team there that are supportive of St Helena that still does not enable us to escape from the fact that we are in a very precarious financial situation, and the fact that we have to have three supplementary appropriations within a single year really demonstrates the extent of the issues. I sincerely hope that we will not have an additional bid for expenditure that's identified after year end, as we did last year, because that would make the situation even worse. But I do want to put on record my concern about the predicament in which we find ourselves. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Karl Thrower

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. I will just echo all the concerns that the Honourable Dr Essex has raised. However, I think that this is becoming to get worrying. The fund is gone. You can't redo this next year. The next government can't redo this. But also, it really concerns me that we have more people working in finance and accounting office and everything that this island has ever had, and we can't balance budgets year on year. The simple fact is, we are spending too much, and it has to stop. You know what the budget is. We're going to do a budget. The Public Service's job is to stick within the budget. I understand that things come up from time to time, but it's exactly what the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex says. It's out of hand. It's just getting too much. We won't have, I mean what was it, if the figures are correct and that does worry me also when we can't even get the figures right, but if the current amount remaining in the general reserve is only 1.9 million pounds, and we have any big problems with droughts, which we've had in the past, and absolutely, you know, God forbid that we have anything like COVID hit us again, suddenly. But I think this is reckless spending, and I am really, really not supportive of it.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Anyone else to speak in the debate? Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would thank the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex for the concerns that you've raised. I think most of us around this table does not like the position that we are finding ourselves in, and I'm sure when we go into committee stages, we'll talk more in detail about why we find ourselves in this position. It isn't my job to stand up and defend the financial department or anybody for that reason, but I think we need to be cognizant of the fact it's not just bad management of finances, this is because we've got no commitment from the UK Government that they're going to fund any of our legacy or historical litigations. That is starting to bear fruit for us now, so we have to pay it. That's no, that's got no real picture, or has no bearing on the financial department not doing their job, it's simply because we have bills to pay because litigation is hitting. So I think we'll talk about this more in the committee stage, but for the listening public, I would not wish for them to think that our finance department is not doing an accurate job, or indeed even the portfolio. So, litigation is one, and as we go through we always know that the medical referrals is another. So, we're dealing with people's lives here, and that is what we are utilising the fund for, the majority of it. I don't wish to go into the detail, because I know you've said that that will happen at committee stage, but I don't think I would like that to linger in the air and for people to think it's just down to irresponsible finance, because that's not quite the picture at all. But I would like to reiterate, as the Minister has mentioned, Minister Brooks, that we have had no commitment to date, not through lack of trying, as the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex mentioned, from the UK Government, that they will support us when these litigation starts to hit and it is eroding our reserves. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much and thank you very much for the debate. Honourable Minister you may respond to the debate if you wish.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I do. I'd like to thank those who support the debate, Mr. Speaker, and I have to disagree with my colleague, and I don't think this is reckless spending. I think this is a result of years and years of a shrinking budget when you talk about, when you look at it in real terms, and an increasing cost on the Public Service. And I think that, as Dr Essex has said, this is a result of trying to provide the reasonable needs to the people of St Helena, year on year when we don't have an adequate budget to cover that. And I think that's my honest opinion. I think that's where it is. There might be a few spending that might not, in other people's opinion, might not be absolutely necessary. But I can tell you now, there's no great deals of money being wasted, in St Helena Government. So, I just like to clear that up, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. So, I put the question that the Third Supplementary Appropriation, (2024/25) Bill, 2024 be approved in principle and referred to a committee of the whole Council.

Question put and agreed

The Speaker -

Mover?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Sorry, Mr. Speaker, just lost my way. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Council do resolve itself into committee and to consider the details provisions of the Bill.

The Speaker -

Is there a seconder? Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Mr. Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. I put the question that the Council do resolve itself into committee to consider the detailed provisions of the Bill.

Question put and agreed

The Speaker -

We are now in committee stage. I put the question. Sorry you wanted to say something Minister Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Yes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, may I ask for permission for the Deputy Financial Secretary to come to the table, please?

The Speaker -

Absolutely, right.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Okay, so we are now, thank you for coming to the table. So we are now in committee. I put the question that the title enacting clause and clause one do stand part of the Bill. Does anyone wish to speak?

The Deputy Financial Secretary, Nicholas Yon -

Perhaps Mr. Chair I could give an explanation.

The Speaker -

Yes.

The Deputy Financial Secretary, Nicholas Yon -

So, with these third supplementary appropriation bill, there is the third supplementary appropriation estimates as well. So, it'd be good to be able to look at both those documents, the bill, and the estimates. The estimate gives some further details to break down what the amount is this. You get sessional paper 12, for today. So, in there, we have for Head 12 under Central Support Service. The main reason for the increase requested is in relation to the technical cooperation budget. So, the request is for additional 374,000 pounds. At the beginning of the year when the budget was put together, there was we put an over program the amount on their budget. So, our working budget was 15% greater than the allocation. We normally do an over program in their budget because of the underspends that we've had in previous years. So we over program it so we can come within budget generally by the end of the year. So, there was an around about 4 million pounds extra that was expected in their budget. Over their time that's been brought down. The Accounting Officer notified the Treasury in November/December to

say that this was increased pressure and it required additional appropriation. However, at the time, in discussions with Ministers and the Accounting Officer in the Treasury, we decided not to put forward a request at that stage until we knew a little bit more firmly as to what the number is. That has now come down to 374,000 pounds. In that we've had a number of urgent requests this year for support staff, and as you will appreciate there is increased pressure, particularly online posts, where we can't recruit to sort of local, locally, and then it has to go to TC, at the TC route to find, to find those kind of statutory positions. Just to give you an idea, new posts that were agreed this year was Strategic Harbor Master, new Theater Nurse, Human Resources Manager, Chemotherapy Nurse and a few other sort of locum positions for the Health department as well. All of that were decisions that had to be made in the year to be able to maintain service delivery. And so there has resulted in this additional request of 374,000 pounds.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Anyone else wish to speak? Mover, I thought you wanted to make an amendment. Not yet? Section one. You're talking about section one. Section one.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I do wish to oppose an amendment. I just had a check with the officer exactly where this little amendment is made, because it's such a small amendment. Mr. Speaker, the short title, under the short title 1, it reads the ordinance might be cited as the third supplementary appropriation, 24/25 ordinance, 2024. That should read ordinance 2025, so I propose amendment to change four to five.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Is there a seconder?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

I beg to second, Mr. Chair.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much, Chief Minister. I put the question that in clause 1, 2024 be changed to 2025.

Question put and agreed.

The Speaker -

Honourable Members in accordance with Standing Order 14, Rule six, we now need to work through the schedules first. I do thank your pardon. I put the question that the title, enacting clause and the amended clause 1 do stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed.

The Speaker -

Honourable Members, in accordance with Standing Order 14, Rule six, we now need to work through the schedule first. I put the question that Head 12 Central Support Service standing in the amount of 374,000 pounds, do stand part of the Bill. Deputy Financial Secretary, would you like to provide an overview?

The Deputy Financial Secretary, Nicholas Yon

Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I apologise sincerely to the committee. I jumped the gun earlier, but everything I said earlier is now applicable to this Head 12, basically in relation to TC and additional pressures on the TC.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Does any other Member wish to speak? No? Thank you very much. I put the question that Head 12 Central Support Service, standing in the amount of 374,000 pounds, do stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed.

The Speaker -

I put the question that Head 14 Attorney General's Chambers standing in the amount of 404,000 pounds do stand part of the Bill. Once again, Deputy Financial Secretary, do you wish to give an overview?

The Deputy Financial Secretary, Nicholas Yon

Thank you, Mr. Chair, yes. So, this additional 4000 pounds is for additional legal support services. Much earlier in this financial year, it was hoped, or we anticipated or wanted to check whether there were any savings that could be made within that budget to cover the 4000 throughout the year. Unfortunately, the vacancy, there hasn't been any vacancies in the local establishment within the AG's Chambers, and therefore they can't cover this additional 4000 pounds, so it's requested here for additional supplementary appropriation.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Any other Honourable Member wish to speak? No? So, I put the question that Head 14 Attorney General's Chambers, standing in the amount of 4000 pounds do stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed.

The Speaker -

I put the question that Head 17 Treasury standing in the amount of 10,000 pounds do stand part of the Bill. Honourable Deputy Financial Secretary, would you like to provide an overview please?

The Deputy Financial Secretary, Nicholas Yon

Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, this 10,000 pounds is for additional legal support for some ongoing litigation cases against SHG, it will help SHG to be able to prepare the information and documentation that's necessary for their particular case.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Thank you. Would any other Honourable Member wish to speak? No. I put the question that Head 17 Treasury, standing in the amount of 10,000 pounds, do stand part of the Bill?

Question put and agreed.

The Speaker -

I put the question that Head 19 Economic Development, standing in the amount of 401,000 pounds do stand part of the Bill. Deputy Financial Secretary.

The Deputy Financial Secretary, Nicholas Yon

Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, this 401,000 pounds additional request has three parts. The first two is reallocation or reclassification of expenditure that's already been budgeted, and the second part is for additional requests. So, the first part is to reclassify capital expenditure allocated under the aviation fuel contract of 250,000 pounds. So, it's moving it from capital expenditure to recurrent expenditure so that they're able to use it under that part. So, because of the way that our ordinance is set up, we have to appropriate capital and recurrent separately. So, it really is just a movement around. Second one is again a similar nature, reclassification of capital expenditure to recurrent for the tourism development program of 75,000 pounds. So, their expenditure is more recurrent than capital, so we're moving that around. The last one is finally an additional request for funding for the air services contract, or the losses on the air services contract. You'll be aware in the second supplementary appropriation, we allocated additional funding to be able to cover the losses from the contingency funding, 1.2 million that was provided under financial aid, and this, again, is just seeking a further allocation based on the estimate what we think it will be the amount of losses by the end of the financial year.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Would any other Member want to speak? Dr. Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr. Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do have concerns about the recurrent issue, about needing to reclassify from capital to recurrent, or in the opposite direction. This is something that seems to crop up in just about every supplementary appropriation. It's something that has been raised by Public Accounts Committee previously, and recommendations were made that additional training was given to accounting officers and responsible officers regarding the parameters for what constitutes capital expenditure and recurrent expenditure. Can the Deputy Financial Secretary tell this House whether, in fact, there have been any measures put in place to try and reduce the instances on which these reclassifications have to occur?

The Deputy Financial Secretary, Nicholas Yon

Yes, thank you. So, we have put in measures in place and I think in most cases, it has improved, where we, you know, sort of at the beginning of the year, we set up what we want to spend for capital versus recurrent. Think with these two and another one that you will see is the circumstances surround that meant that this is the only way it can be dealt with. So, for instance, under the tourism development program, at that point in time when the budget was approved, we hadn't completely agreed how it was going to be spent, so we assumed that there would be some spending on capital. But as the year progressed and the board had looked at what needed to be done, they then determined that actually, we won't spend it on sort of capital items, but it'll be more to do with operational maintenance rather than actual new assets purchased. In terms of the aviation fuel contract, what has happened this year is that the set aside this capital amount, it is we aren't ready to actually purchase the new capital items for the fuel management contract. So, what is being done is to move it to recurrent so that we can transfer it from the consolidated fund into the special BFI special fund to be able to finance capital expenditure next financial year.

The Hon. Dr. Corinda Essex -

Thank you for that explanation.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Anyone else wish to speak? I put the question that Head 19 Economic Development standing in the amount of 401,000 pounds do stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed.

The Speaker -

I put the question that Head 23 Health and Social Care standing in the amount of 585,000 pounds, do stand part of the Bill. Deputy Financial Secretary. Would you like to provide an overview?

The Deputy Financial Secretary, Nicholas Yon

Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, there are a number of things that has resulted in this request for 808,700 err 585,000 pounds, the first being increased requirements for cancer treatment and the general cost of medications at an additional 189,000 pounds for this year. We continue to see the cost of medications increase, as well as in particular, for cancer treatment. And so that is increased pressure significantly on the pharmaceuticals budget for Health. We also have the overseas medical treatment 114,000 pounds that is being requested here. What I will say is that this year, Health has also utilized, in advance, some of the BIOT funding to be able to send or to clear some of the waiting lists for overseas medical referrals. We haven't received the BIOT funding yet, is expected in next financial year. So, what is being done here is, what we are doing is actually spending in advance of receiving that money. So, it's, when that money is received for the BIOT funding, we will then put that, replenish that into the consolidated fund for overseas medical treatment. At the moment is estimated to be about 174,000 pounds or thereabouts. Additionally, there is the reclassification of expenditure to recurrent for the patient information system. That capital project isn't quite complete yet, but it will be by, in next year. So, what we're doing, similar to Dr. Essex question just now around moving monies, what we're doing is to put it from capital into recurrent so we can transfer it to the locally funded special funds, so that we can recover it next year and the money won't be lost. And then we also have the operational costs incurred for Residential Child Care Services. There was an urgent service that needed to be set up in this financial year. So that's 54,000 pounds. We have aero medical evacuation, 32,000 pounds. The EMIS license fees, 31,000. When the budget was put together this year, it was anticipated that the new system would have been up and running. Unfortunately, there's a delay in that project, and therefore we need to also continue to operate the EMIS system in parallel with the new system. And so, the license fees are required for only for this year. Then we also have increased electricity costs for the hospital and has resulted in the tariff change that took place during this year. In addition to that, is the medical laboratory increased need for referral of specimens off island for testing. That's 25,000 pounds. So, they obviously tried to do as much testing as they can on island, but it depends on the nature of those tests and what can be done on island. But increased number this year had to go off island for testing. Then there's the employee costs across the portfolio because of vacancy savings not being able to be achieved, or also the minimum wage increase during the year. A budget is held centrally under Payments on Behalf of the Crown the Treasury, and so we will then release that money over to Health and other departments who've asked. There's also the IT recharges that have increased this year; medical supplies for use at the Community Care Complex, 16,000 pounds for things like for things for day to day, sort of needs of the clients there at the CCC. And then we also have transport recharges for a particular department increase this year that wasn't budgeted for.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Anyone else like to speak? Minister Henry.

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Thank you. Mr. Speaker. I just like to, Mr. Chair, I'd just like to add to the Deputy Financial Secretary's assessment and some of the comments he made, and just to mention that there are a number of things on here, for instance, like the largest expenditure on cancer treatment, et cetera, which the department is currently and at a very late stage now addressing through new supply and some other elements, which I will bring to Members as soon as we have completed this. This goes to show that the department isn't spending recklessly. It goes to show that the department is a front-line department that deals with emergencies as and when they should be at the appropriate manner. To describe and, for expenditure on such a line as medical treatment as reckless, for me, I think it's reckless myself Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to add that comment so that the listening public can understand where I'm coming from.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Anyone else like to speak? Dr. Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr. Corinda Essex -

Thank you. Can an explanation be provided as to delay with the EMIS program?

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Yes, ma'am, the EMIS program has unfortunately, so I'll try to explain this as simple as possible. We have four programs that are running just about in terms of, some of them has expired their renewal dates, the others are no longer supported by some of the international suppliers. We are trying to ensure that the new program, the new patient source program, goes into place and can speak to all of the other programs. If some of you would have watched the program I sent you on the UK, in the NHS, they will describe the same problems they have. Unfortunately, we buy our programs from the UK, and what has happened is that these programs are now outdated, and in order for us to make an immediate fix, we would have to update all of them and then create patches for these programs to speak to each other. This would cost an extreme amount of money. So, what we have tried to do is we have utilised, we've chosen two of the programs that we see as our future program, which is patient source, and I can't remember which one that the lab uses, so that they all work together in the future. So rather than spending these large sums now for a patch that I will have to change again next year, and then probably when we potentially take out EMIS, what we've done is we've tried rolled over the program so we can make that strategic change when it is necessary.

The Hon. Dr. Corinda Essex -

Thank you to the Honourable Minister for that response. Is that, is the current situation, the reason why, for example, patients go to have an appointment with a doctor to get feedback from the lab results and find the doctor hasn't yet received the lab result?

The Hon. Martin Henry -

That is the exact issue, ma'am and I know we could have the different debate about this, Mr. Chair, but thank you for raising it, because it is the exact reason why patients are now sometimes waiting a bit longer. We have put in a system in place, but I can assure yourself and members of the public that what has to happen now is that we have to physically check the data and ensure that the right results goes to the right doctor for the right patient. So, it's taking an awful long time for a medical professional to check that, because the programs isn't working.

So, members are currently waiting beyond for results. But it is my opinion and my professional's opinion that we actually deliver the right results in a longer time than do the opposite. Thank you, Ma'am.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Thank you very much. Anyone else wish to speak? Then I put the question that Head 23 Health and Social Care, standing in the amount of 585,000 pounds, do stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed.

The Speaker -

I put the question that Head 26 Environment, Natural Resources and Planning, standing in the amount of 18,000 pounds do stand part of the Bill. Deputy Financial Secretary, would you like to provide an overview please?

The Deputy Financial Secretary, Nicholas Yon

Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, the 18,000 pounds for ENRP is for additional employee costs across the portfolio for the year. The main driver behind that is minimum wage change that was agreed in July, and we hold, as I mentioned earlier, we hold a central pot under Payments on Behalf of the Crown that will distribute out now based on the request from departments.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Anyone else wish to speak? No. Thank you very much. I put the question that Head 26 Environment, Natural Resources and Planning standing in the amount of 18,000 pounds do stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed.

The Speaker -

I put the question that the total of 1,392,000 pounds do stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed.

The Speaker -

So now we move to Schedule two, Capital Expenditure. I put the question that Head 23 Health and Social Care standing in the amount of 31,000 pounds do stand part of the Bill. Deputy Financial Secretary, would you, once again, provide an overview?

The Deputy Financial Secretary, Nicholas Yon

Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, this is capital expenditure needed by the hospital for replacement, urgent replacement this year of some assets, hospital autoclaves. So, there is no provision for in original budget, but it's an urgent replacement that was required.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Anyone else wish to speak? Minister Henry.

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Mr. Speaker, just for the aid of the listening public, the autoclave is the machine that sterilizes all our equipment before we can do surgery. Just so people are aware of how important it is for us to provide that particular level of service. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. If there are no further speakers, I put the question that Head 23 Health and Social Care standing in the amount of 31,000 pounds do stand part of the Bill

Question put and agreed.

The Speaker -

I put the question that the total of 31,000 pounds do stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Members. We now turn back to the main part of the Bill again. Clause two, Consolidated Fund Provision of the Financial Year 2024/2025. Does any other, does any Honourable Member wish to speak? No? I put the question that clause two, Consolidated Fund Provision for the Financial Year 2024 2025 do stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Members, we will now resume our session in Council. Thank you, the Bill is to be reported please.

Question put and agreed.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to report that the Third Supplementary Appropriation, (24/25) Bill, 2025 passed the Committee with one amendment and to move that this Council approve the said Bill and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted.

The Speaker -

Is there a Seconder?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Mr. Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much, Chief Minister. Honourable mover, do you wish to speak again to the motion?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Yes Mr. Speaker, I would just like to thank all of those who supported the motion. As I said, none of want to be in this situation, especially for the third time this year. But unfortunately, as the Deputy Financial Secretary have said there is situations that may arouse that requires an additional expenditure. I would also take this opportunity to ask my Honourable friend, Karl Thrower, would he like to retract his statement suggesting that Officers and Ministers are

spending money recklessly now that the Deputy Financial Secretary has taken us through the provisions of the Bill and explain why this money needs to be appropriated. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Honourable Karl Thrower, do you wish to respond?

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Mr. Speaker, I won't retract it. I'll explain to my adjournment debate.

The Speaker -

Just stand please.

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Sorry Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to retract my statement, but I will explain it in the adjournment debate, because I think it's been taken out of context, but that's what the adjournment debate can fix.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. I put the question that this Council approves the Third Supplementary Appropriation, (2024/25) Bill, 2024 and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted. Do Members wish to speak? No? Oh, I do beg your pardon. The Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter-

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I feel that I do need to stand up and say something, because I was very quiet throughout that whole process. Mr. Speaker, that was because, as you highlighted the last time we did this, the detail that we had in preparation for this session from the Deputy Financial Secretary. So again, just to place that on record, to thank the Deputy Financial Secretary for the briefing that we had in advance of this, which meant that I did not actually need to say anything throughout. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much for that. Honourable Mover, do you wish to respond to any part of the debate at all?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Nothing further, Mr. Speaker, just like to thank everyone for this.

The Speaker -

I put the question that this Council approves the Third Supplementary Appropriation (2024/25) Bill, 2024 and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted.

Question put and agreed.

The Speaker -

Next item of business please.

Motion No. 2 - The Hon Minister for Treasury and Economic Development

The Speaker -

The Honourable Minister for Treasury and Economic Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr. Speaker, may I just have a moment to get my paperwork in order? I seem to be missing the sheet.

The Speaker -

Good to have paperwork in order.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'm ready to resume now. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that in accordance with, and subject to Section 102 of the Constitution, this House empowers the Financial Secretary to authorise the withdrawal of monies from the consolidated fund in order to make the expenditure necessary to carry out services or projects of the Government in the Financial Year commencing on the first of April 2025, until the occurrence of either of the following, whichever is earliest so, a) the expiry of the four month period, which commenced on the first of April 2025, or the enactment of the Appropriation Ordinance for the financial year 2025/26. Mr. Speaker, in accordance, I'm going to say that again. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that last evening.

The Speaker -

Just before that is there a seconder?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Mr. Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much, Chief Minister. Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Mover, do you speak to the motion? Do you wish to speak to the motion now?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Yes, thank you Mr. Speaker, to jump a little bit ahead Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that only last night, or late last night, we received notification and confirmation from HMG on the financial aid settlement for 25/26. Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the challenging financial environments with the UK at this time. The Chancellor's spring budget speech yesterday was a reminder of this, including the 6 billion pound cut in the aid budget. With this in mind, I am pleased to announce that His Majesty's Government has confirmed an increase in our core financial aid of 5%. This results in an increase of 1.7 million pounds. Noting the cuts that have been made to the FCDO budget lines we are extremely grateful for this outcome. However, Mr. Speaker, our financial position is still fragile, and it will be necessary for Ministers to take some hard and difficult decisions around prioritisation of resources in the coming weeks. I will now work with the Chief Minister and other Ministers and Officials to agree how the additional funding will be allocated to the priority areas with a view of bringing forward Appropriation Bill to this house at the earliest opportunity. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank, sorry, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank HMG for the increase in such difficult times for both SHG and HMG. Whilst this is good news Mr. Speaker, we still will be required to proceed with a rollover budget here today. Mr. Speaker, the process of authorising expenditure in advance of an appropriation or a rollover, as it's commonly known, allows the Government to continue providing essential public services like Health and Social Care, Education and Emergency Services from the first of April. The Constitution allows for up to 1/3 of the 24/25 appropriation budget to be spent. This means that

in real, in the result in this means that in the resolution passed here in this House today, Executive Council will be authorising the Financial Secretary to withdraw funds from a consolidated fund for expenditure of up to 17 million over the next four months. However, Mr. Speaker, we know that won't happen because we only got 1.5 million so, but it does allow us, obviously, in the Constitution. Although four months are allowed under Constitution, it is our intention to limit the time period as far as possible so that appropriation can be brought to this House, as I said, as soon as possible, and allow portfolios to start implementing their plans and budgets with limited disruptions. A rollover budget, as we all know, Mr. Speaker, does place considerable strain on the public finances. This is exacerbated by a substantially reduction in the general reserve of the consolidated fund. As I said already, Mr. Speaker, it is estimated to only be 1.9 million left here, after today. Treasury, Mr. Speaker will now therefore work to implement measures to limit spending by portfolios, to essential spend only, ensuring spending means are only necessary to meet existing contractual commitments of the Government, including employees and commercial contracts. Expenditure authorized by law, and expenditure necessary to limit or eliminate immediate or future liabilities of the government. This does not include spending on new initiatives, projects or contracts. Instruction to this effect has already been sent out by the Financial Secretary to portfolios, and this will be monitored by the Treasury. Mr. Speaker, it is customary that I announce in the House before the beginning of any new financial year, any tax policy changes. Mr. Speaker, I will not be making any such announcement here today, as these discussions are ongoing. However, should any amendments be agreed, these changes will be publicised before implementation. Mr. Speaker, as I said, we set out today not knowing, well, I wake up this morning not knowing what our budget would be. Fortunately, overnight, we have had confirmation, but it's been very late, so obviously we have a lot of work to do in a very short amount of time.

The Speaker -
Sure.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

To enable for this Government to start their plans for the new financial year, we will try to appropriate this bill sooner rather than later. So, and I like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I beg to move.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Members, the motion is in accordance with and subject to section 102 of the Constitution, this House empowers the Financial Secretary to authorise the withdrawal for money from the consolidated fund in order to meet expenditure necessary to carry out services or projects for the Government in the financial year, commencing the first of April 2025, until the occurrence of either of the following, whichever is the earliest, a) the expiry of four months from the commencement of financial year 2025/26 or b) the enactment of the appropriation ordinance for the financial year 2025/26. The motion is now open for debate. Anyone wish to speak? Honourable. Dr. Corinda Essex, no? I do beg your pardon. Honourable Christine Scipio.

The Hon. Minister Scipio -

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the motion. As a Minister, Mr. Speaker, I think it will be reckless off me to not support the motion, because that would mean stopping services to our community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much, and so now Honourable. Dr. Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr. Corinda Essex -

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is more than disappointing that we once again are faced with a rollover budget. This really seems to be becoming the new normal, and it has serious implications for St Helena's economic growth and sustainable development. United Kingdom Government is aware of this, and this is probably why the aid settlement was announced yesterday. The prolonged rollover experience last year should at least not reoccur, which is indeed good news. Last year we were getting very near the final wire before we actually were able to implement the substantive budget. Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend portfolios for their attempts year on year, to mitigate the negative impacts of successive rollover budgets and to continue to deliver core services. However, this annual hurdle constrains their ability to attain the targets contained within their strategic plans, plan ahead confidently and effectively and make informed decisions. Given Britain's own financial challenges at the moment, it's not surprising that the aid settlement for 2025/26 has only just been received. But although this is a fairly generous settlement, given the world economic climate, and indeed the situation in the United Kingdom itself, it still leaves St Helena Government's finances in a very precarious situation, which has been exacerbated, as has already been stated today, by the depletion of our general reserves. The longer the delay before the budget for the upcoming financial year can be appropriated formally, the more serious the situation is likely to become. So, it was very pleasing to hear the Minister state the work has already started in preparation for that, and it shouldn't be long before the budget report to this House for formal approval. Some members of the public do not believe that there really is a shortage of funding necessary for St Helena Government to deliver its services to an acceptable standard across all portfolios. They think that the lack of funding is an excuse for not taking action or more action to address key issues. But Mr. Speaker, the truth is, that St Helena has had budgets below the level really required for years, despite the fact that there have been some small uplifts. The core problem is definitely not reckless spending, although some constituents are convinced that SHG is still wasting money, and I do believe that there are some inefficiencies that require addressing, particularly really relating to procurement. For example, I have evidence that there are some items of equipment and so on that are purchased by St Helena Government that could have been sourced at a much lower cost through other means, whether the cheaper versions would deliver the value for money is another issue that needs to be considered. But my major concern is not about expenditure. Portfolios have tightened their belts considerably in response to budget constraints over the past years. My main issue is with the need for greater productivity. I am aware that the competence and capacity of staff are always cited as barriers to this, Mr. Speaker, there are some excellent staff members within all portfolios, but in general, all employees require effective management, incentives and discipline within a strong and structured work ethos if they are to improve their skills and become more productive. And I think this is where performance management within SHG has a large role to play. Time is money, and the longer that employees are off task or not fully engaged with what they are doing, the more productivity will decline, and the greater the opportunity cost will become. Mr. Speaker, I really, really dislike voting for something that I know is going to cause problems and is not beneficial to St Helena's development. But it is with deep regret that I have to support this motion, because if it is not passed, SHG will not be able to function after the 31st of March, so this is the only responsible choice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter-

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise in support of the rollover budget, reluctantly, and I completely share the sentiments of my Honourable colleague, the Honourable Dr. Corinda Essex. Year after year, we see ourselves in this position, if I recall correctly, this time last year we had approved the rollover budget and the following day we were told what the settlement would be, and it's a little bit earlier this year, but in reality, Mr. Speaker, whilst a 5% core increase is certainly welcomed, with inflation at 8% this is effectively a 3% reduction in real terms. As was noted by the Chief Minister earlier, our operational budgets have been eroded over a number of years now, and our aspiration as an island to see change is somewhat dashed as a result of this. That noted, I'm not going to carry on harping on, because I think my Honourable colleague said just about everything that I wanted to say, but I look forward to seeing what is proposed in the forthcoming budget, and how that is prioritised, noting the numerous priorities that we currently have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much Honourable Member. Honourable Gillian Brooks.

The Hon. Gillian Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll make that very brief, but just to say that, yes, I do support the motion, because we know that without this, services will just not function, and we can't have that. So just a thank you to everybody for the work that they have done to get us this far.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Elizabeth Knipe.

The Hon. Elizabeth Knipe -

As a new Elected Member, I would like to support my colleagues for the budget, because it's all new to me, and I can understand if it wasn't rolled over, we would have been at dire straits. Thank you very much.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much Honourable Member. Anyone else? Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we're all saying the same things, but I would like to support my Minister for Finance and Economic Development. As we all have said, it's not the ideal place to be, but it is somewhat comforting, if I can put it that, to now know that we do have a budget through 25/26 and as I think a number of us are saying, we are indeed grateful to the UK Government for providing us with a budget, because it is, continuously heard of the difficulties they are facing in the UK. But for the listening public, I think I'd like to thank my Ministerial Team and all of the Public Service for all the input that they put into the requested scenarios to FCDO and, of course, the amount of work that was done to put forward the modified zero-based budget. For the listening community, I know my Ministers and I have put a lot of information into the public domain through the assistance of the Communications Hub of what we would have utilised the modified zero-based budget for. We requested, as I'm not entirely sure who mentioned it today, maybe it was one of our Ministers earlier on when answering questions, we asked for an additional 16.3 million. The fact that we've got a 5% increase, which equates to round about 1.7 million increase, hopefully that will give some indication of the hard work still ahead for the remaining three months that we are in office. Because a lot of the work that we had proposed to do, should we have received the additional

funding, will now have to go into the priorities of the priorities, which is never an easy place to be. And I just hope that everybody on St Helena will pull together and start to really appreciate and understand, as the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex says, that we are eroding our reserves. And if you look at what's been approved today under the third supplementary appropriation, it is evident that a lot of our funding is going through first lines, front line services, sorry, to do with medical care, which is all prevalent when we are in an aging population. We are trying to obviously invest into our children, education, etc. So, although it's a positive because we know what we're heading into, we have to be extremely careful as we move into the new financial year, knowing the state of our reserves. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Anyone else wish to speak? So, does the Honourable Mover wish to respond to the debate?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just briefly, I would just like to thank all the Members who supported the motion. As all Members have said, this is not ideal, none of us want to be in a situation, but we are. I won't say anything about the amount awarded. What I will say to the listening public is that every opportunity that Ministers get, and I'm sure Councillors as well, we try to make the case to the FCDO about having a one-year settlement. On top of that, also about having a roll year, a rollover budget. Yes, as Robert Midwinter is saying, a three-year settlement, our talks is about the constraints of a one-year settlement, and our request is asking for a three-year settlement. So, I just want to, I guess, apologise to the public because yet again, another financial year, we find ourselves in the same situation. And I just like to assure the public, we are not here, not for want of trying to change the situation. We have done, I think, all that we could possibly do, but unfortunately, it is what it is. So, Mister Speaker, as we enter into the next financial year again in a rollover budget, as I said, I do commend the Officers and all Government staff for actually all their hard work done in in the preparation that happens every year come December time during the FAM visit. We were hoping that this year, this will resulted in some benefits, with a budget settlement before the end of the financial year. And I guess we haven't, we have received that although it's two days before the financial year, but either way, Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for my colleagues for the support of this budget. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. I put the question, in accordance with and subject to section 102 of the Constitution this House empowers the Financial Secretary to authorise the withdrawal for monies from the consolidated fund, in order to meet expenditure necessary to carry out the services or projects for the government in the financial year commencing the first of April 2025 until the occurrence of either of the following, whichever is the earliest, a) the expiry of four months from the commencement of the financial year 2025/26 or b) the enactment of the Appropriation Ordinance for the financial year 2025/2026.

Question put and agreed.

The Speaker -

Chief Minister. Sorry I'm ahead of myself now.

7. ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do adjourn sine die.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Is there a seconder? Honourable Minister Scipio.

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, has been a long day. I beg to second.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. The motion is that this House adjourns sine die. The motion is open for debate. Elected Members may speak in turn to the adjournment debate. First person up is Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the adjournment. Firstly Mr. Speaker, having concluded our recent round of constituency meetings last week, I wish to thank those members of our community who attended and contributed to some very lively and yet constructive discussions. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, two of the questions that I raised in the House this morning came about as a direct result of these meetings. So, I hope that the constituents who raised them with me were able to hear the responses received from my Honourable colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I would also wish to note that the statement that I made at our last formal sitting regarding our transmission to a Ministerial, that should read, transition to a Ministerial form of Government was simply that, a statement of fact. I was in no way meaning to demean the level of work that was undertaken prior to our election in October 2021. That noted, Mr. Speaker, it does, however, remain a fact that even now, four years later, further work needs to be done in terms of developing our system of governance, and it is therefore good to see that the Governance Review Team will be back on island shortly in order to follow up on this important body of work. Again, Mr. Speaker, I would take this opportunity to stress the importance of continuity when such matters are being addressed. But then I must, of course, state my own personal interest in seeing continuity beyond the current term of office, as I have already publicly stated that I will be standing for election again this year. So Mr. Speaker, those points noted, I will now turn to what has been going on since we last sat. Firstly, Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the Education, Skills and Employment portfolio both for the level of public engagement was undertaken during the recent Education Review, and also for the decision that was ultimately reached in respect of restructuring the primary education provision on the island. Now that this decision has been taken, I hope that all parties will work together to ensure that what has been decided can be implemented as smoothly as possible and Mr. Speaker, as I have said regarding other matters of policy and development, noting that there could well be a change of leadership later this year, as a community, we need to keep moving forwards, there should be no going backwards. Mr. Speaker, I similarly wish to congratulate the Career Access Office, along with all other organizers and participants on the Careers Fair that was held last week as this was, has traditionally been held at Prince Andrew School. I must admit that I was initially quite sceptical about the venue that was proposed for this year. However, the weather held out and it turned out to be a good day, so well done to all involved. Mr. Speaker, I would also wish to place on record my thanks to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, both for their written submission to Select Committee 1 and also for their participation in our live hearing that was held on Monday, 24 March. Mr. Speaker, when we talk about establishing openness and transparency within government, it is sometimes easy to forget that the Select Committees are an integral part of this process and that these committees can invite other

parties outside of Government to give evidence. Mr. Speaker, Select Committee I unfortunately cannot progress with the further live hearings this month as originally intended however, we still hope to complete our current inquiry before dissolution. Mr. Speaker, whilst referring to openness and transparency, I also wish to note the laying in this House earlier today of the Performance Audit Report by Audit St Helena relating to the fisheries, fishing operations agreement. Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of going over what I said earlier. Suffice to say that we need to get on and collectively resolve matters such as this in a constructive manner that benefits our community as a whole, because matters such as this and the recent report regarding the fibre optic cable do not help the island to move forward, and they certainly do not help us to instil confidence in other interests that look to do business with our island. Mr. Speaker, whilst continuing on the theme of openness and transparency, I wish to note my own personal disappointment that the expenses listed for Elected Members are collective rather than broken down by Elected Member, and I'm referring to the written response to the Honourable Karl Throver today, that they are not broken down by Elected Member in much the same way as individual MPs expenses in the UK are made public. As a Member of this Legislative Council elected by the community of this island, I would have no objection whatsoever in my own expense claims being made public and have on a number of occasions raised this myself with the Clerk of Councils, and I understand that she is working on this, so hopefully this can be published soon. Mr. Speaker, another sessional paper that I wish to make reference to is number 20 of 2025, relating to the Loan Balances Recoverable by the St Helena Government as at the 31st of December 2024. Mr. Speaker, you may well recall that around this time last year, I tried to ask questions relating to the balances outstanding because I was concerned that there had been very little recovery against the approximate £300,000 that remains on SHG books as recoverable, with some £75,000 of this listed as ex-student loans. Mr. Speaker, another year has passed, and again, little movement other than the addition of interest against housing loans to individuals, the balance of which now stands at £152,231. Mr. Speaker, despite the lack of movement, the comment noted against all of these has remained the same year on year, namely, that recovery arrangements have been initiated. Mr. Speaker, as I noted about a year ago, because of the lack of movement and noting the sums involved, I feel this needs further investigation, and I would hope that this can be undertaken by the Public Accounts Committee at some point in the near future. Mr. Speaker, it was truly wonderful to see so many visitors walking around the island last Sunday when the MV Europa visited the island, however, I do feel that it was a missed opportunity that so few local businesses took advantage of this to offer goods or services on the day. Mr. Speaker, it is good to see that the minimum wage will soon be going up again. However, I again wish to draw attention to the requirement in the Sixth Form Policy for a work placement for a minimum of 21 hours per week in respect of those undertaking the vocational study route, and the fact that this means that £250 per month allowance falls below minimum wage, noting that at 16 or 17, 21 hours per week should equate to, after the first of July, £321, £323.05 per month, and at 18, 21 hours per week should equate to £409.50 per month, something that I hope the Education, Skills and Employment portfolio will review, particularly in relation to students who have undertaken the vocational study route and are therefore not entitled to free transport to and from school or their work placement. And finally, Mr. Speaker, before closing, I wish to again place on record that we still await visibility of the draft Policy and Legislative Program, despite the numerous commitments made in this Honourable House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Anyone else wish to speak? I need to get this right now. Honourable Gillian Brooks.

The Hon. Gillian Brooks

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the adjournment. So last week, we saw the announcement of the decision on the primary school reorganization. This has been discussed and in the pipeline for several years now, and it is commendable that has now come to realization. There is still a lot of work to be done, but thankfully, it is now off the starting block. A few weeks ago, we attended the awards ceremony at Prince Andrew School, and it is admirable to see the achievements reached by pupils. Events such as these really bring home to you the work that is put in to assist students to accomplish the best they can. Also last week, we saw a very successful Careers Fair. This year, the event was held in Jamestown, and I would like to say thank you to Career Access and the team that work to put everything together. We know these events do not happen overnight, and the Careers Fair enables portfolios and businesses to showcase and promote what they can do and just as importantly, where there are vacancies, give the opportunity to those on the spot in formal interactions with those who are actually doing the job. The minimum wage is to be increased in July, which, although it may seem a small amount, is going in the right direction. Understandably, there's always the need to strike the happy medium between acknowledging financial difficulties and putting in place an increase that is manageable to businesses. Restraints with funding impacts all and we've heard so much about that today in this House, and often the focus is on front line working and this is very understandable. But I would like to make mention today of St Helena Government's Building Maintenance team who has to cover as best as possible the necessary essential maintenance needed for government infrastructure within a very limited budget. There are years of work experience within this team and their input is valuable to us. Regards infrastructure we know our roads are not as we would want them to be and again through financial constraints what we would like to do is outweighed by what we can afford to do. The Roads team really do their best to manage a schedule of works across the island. What I really struggle with Mr Speaker is that we are always hearing about potholes, bad roads, but then we witness drivers who seem to have no consideration of the state of some of our roads, even for road safety. Speeding and inconsiderate road use has been highlighted so much recently. This week we had another Select Committee 1 hearing on a report presented by the Equality and Human Rights Commission on Health and Social Care and also a Minuters Question Time. Now these are sessions that give the opportunity for scrutiny to be done and for the information to be given on the spot, in the public domain. Also, this week public meetings were started on the redevelopment of the Jamestown seafront. I understand that meetings held so far have gone really well and this gives the public a chance to have their say. The seafront is such an important part of our history and our present, so it is vital not to lose the culture but to develop it that plays such an important part in the island's future. And I was gonna end Mr Speaker with some notes to say that we are still waiting on our budget but Minister Brooks has stolen my thunder on that one with his announcement, so I'll leave it at that. I'm very happy to hear about the budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Anyone else? Let's see some red lights please. Honourable Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker this afternoon. So first I'd like to talk about the newly announced public transport links to Blue Hill. This new route, which has been announced earlier this week, will allow members of the Blue Hill community to access essential services, as well as improved access to work, fostering accessibility and strengthening our local economy. Effective transport options create more opportunity for individuals and businesses alike.

Equally there are now new priority clinic spots for Blue Hill residents at the Half Tree Hollow Clinic on a Friday, mirroring the arrangements already in place for Sandy Bay and this improved provision will help the community to better access the care that they need. Now this improvement reflects dedication to safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our people. And I'm gonna take a moment here to thank all those who were involved in introducing these provisions for the Blue Hill community and to my neighbours, I'll just say I look forward to seeing you on the bus. But on a more sombre note, it was sad today to see the scrutiny process, of which audit is an important part, under attack by Government Ministers. Audit and scrutiny process exist to help the government understand why things have gone wrong, so we can fix it. It may not be perfect and it's not above criticism but I think the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex highlighted how these things can be challenged in the proper and most effective way. This government seems to have a difficult relationship with scrutiny, which was also on display today, with a Member being accused of not living in the real world, simply for doing a part of our job, and that is asking the questions that have been put to us by our constituents. And as we've been reminded on a number of occasions in this House, LegCo questions are not about us, they are about informing the public. These kind of statements to me show a lack of respect for the scrutiny process that we are obligated to provide and participate in, in order to serve the public properly. Today was a step in a very worrying direction and all I'll do now is to simply urge the government to think very carefully about how it engages with the scrutiny process in all its forms going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Member. Anyone else, I think Ronald Coleman, Honourable Ronald Coleman, I think you just beat to the pip there, thank you.

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three months' time, we will be all over. Council will be dissolved on the 30th of June, but there's still a lot of work to do. As a Legislative Council, Mr. Speaker, we were promised a Legislative Programme. We even asked if only a draft we would be happy. But our four-year term is coming to an end, and we still haven't had a draft. What a four years of Legislative Council! Anyway, the four years to me has been a blessing, knowing that I was able to help a lot of people, whether young or old, from all walks of life. Some of which I had to walk with to get some satisfaction out of life. It has been challenging, emotional, and sometimes even had to use some empathy. For all of us, it took long hours into the night, especially reading and writing reports, trying to get what was right for St Helena, and importantly, what was right for the people we serve. I know I disagree sometimes, but I want what is good for the people, even though some might think it was wrong or not appropriate. But we all think and see things differently at times. Anyway, my first four years as a Councillor for the people of this island was rewarding, and it's now going to fade away. One of the biggest issues I had to deal with on the island was the cost of living and people trying to making ends meet. This is because over a quarter of our population are living on social benefits. They are low-income households or pensioners on low incomes, and I hope that whoever comes into government will continue, when given the opportunity, to raise living standards for the people of St. Helena and take us to a better place. Mr. Speaker, although there's been a lot of toing and froing, and a lot of work being done, there's still a lot to be done. Wherever we go, there are always complaints about the roads. But here, I want to mention the men who are cutting away the verges on the roads and cleaning the manholes and doing appropriate maintenance, they are doing an excellent job, and their work is not gone unnoticed. Another group of workers I would like to recognise is those who collect our waste, especially when the specialist vehicles

out of action, and the unpleasantness that they have to put up with, I have witnessed this myself. Our early hours in the morning, and the unpleasant smells and conditions of the bag being collected. So well done to these workers, and we really appreciate what they do, and hope they will have some additional rewards for this. Then there is still our fishing industry, and where this is heading. All I want is an economic viable industry which benefits the industry and our island. There is still the need for social house-building programme, and will we get a result for Bunkers Hill before we leave office? Will we also get a name of the service provider for our island's communications? Is it still government's aspiration for full fibre coverage and wireless access to cover particularly hard-to-reach locations? We were also promised bigger, faster, and cheaper internet service with the Equiano cable, which was commissioned in June 2023, and which we had used from October of the same year. We want to boost tourism, but our island really needs a clean-up, don't you think? We have millions of pounds pumped into the marine and cloud forest projects, etc. but what about our physical environment in which we live. The airport was built to bring in tourism, which was believed to make the island self-sufficient but we were told on Tuesday that the island would never be self-sufficient through tourism, if I heard correctly. Is there any hope for us? I'm also happy that the public transport has been extended. Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on the Prince Andrew School certificate presentation 2024, which took place on the 28th of February last month. I was thrilled to see students achieving at local level, O level, and A level standards under the circumstances with the shortage of teachers we've been experiencing and want to say well done to the students for their achieving, the teachers, the parents for all their continued support. Let's hope these students go on to make ambassadors for St Helena. Then on the 10th of March we had the Commonwealth Day, which is celebrated throughout the world or Commonwealth. Thanks goes to His Excellency the Governor and Mrs. Phillips for hosting the day's event at Plantation, and the small committee of Legislative Council for arranging the day, which went on to include the raising of the Commonwealth flag ceremony. The Ministers and other Elected Members of Legislative Council also split up on the day and attended Prince Andrew School and the other three primary schools for Commonwealth Assemblies, where Members read the King's message for Commonwealth Day. In closing, I would like to thank those people who come out to our constituency meetings and want to thank them for their support over the last four years. And Mr. Speaker, I wanted to say something about the budget settlement, but now we know that it's here. We are happy with what we've got, but I still would like to know if the FCO in the UK is serious about St Helena as one of the four Overseas Territories who are still in receipt of overseas development aid. The UK Government's long-standing policy is to meet the reasonable assistance needs of the UK's Overseas Territories where financial self-sufficiency is not possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Member. Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me first declare my interest as President of the Chamber of Commerce and as an importer and retailer.

The Speaker -

Thank you.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the adjournment, and I am not going to give a valedictory speech or start my election campaign this afternoon, because if I did, it would keep us here

until 5 o'clock and I think we all want to go home before that. So, I'm going to focus on two key issues. One is that the Honourable Speaker suggested, and I think we all concurred, that it would be good if, when feedback is received in response to questions asked in Ministers' Question Time, that information is then made public. And indeed, following the session this week, I have received the information regarding the number of inward investors granted approved investor status over the last three years, and the total is four, including one which is headed by a St Helenian, currently working overseas. Turning now to what is an issue of major concern and growing concern, I wish to focus on the extremely negative impact of inflation and other factors on the disposable income of households, and persons on St Helena, and this is resulting both in hardship for individuals and families, and causing many businesses to struggle, with several even having to close. Demand for many non-essential items and services has dropped drastically over the past two years and is continuing to decline. I know this is not the first time that this has been mentioned in this Honourable House, but the situation is actually worsening. Raising of the minimum wage in July is designed to ease the situation somewhat, but it will not do so alone. In fact, it can be a bit of a double-edged sword because of the very labour-intensive nature of most businesses on the island. Most businesses are not making sufficient profit to increase wages without passing on additional costs to their customers and/or clients. Without other action being taken, the rise could therefore do more harm than good, as it could cause inflation to increase, and then the actual disposable income to reduce further, which would ultimately result in greater hardship and more businesses being forced to downsize or close. To ease the situation, St Helena Government needs to focus urgent attention on a total review of the current tax and revenue regime to examine how this can be adjusted to increase disposable income without serious detriment to revenue generation, and also to try and think out of the box about what other measures can be done to reduce the impact of the inflation that everyone is experiencing. I understand fully that this is far from being an easy task, but in the current economic climate, it is becoming all the more essential. I am very aware of the precarious situation of St Helena Government's finances at this point in time, as has been mentioned earlier. But trying to raise more revenue by actions such as increasing rents and other key fees and charges is very likely to be counterproductive, resulting in even lower demand, some of which could result in further costs impacting government in the future. And I will just cite one example. I'm not suggesting that there is any plan to increase fees or charges for, let's say, medical laboratory tests but if these were increased, this could deter people from having follow-ups, and then that could result in their condition deteriorating, and they might ultimately then need medical evacuation or anyway overseas medical referral. There are ways, possibly, of addressing the situation. One that has often been mooted is about adjusting the income tax threshold and increasing it from £7,000 per year. Another option could be reducing the basic income tax rate from 26% to a lower per cent, and these are the sort of options that should be fully explored. And I'm sure at this point in the financial year, the Tax and Revenue Working Group and Treasury are in fact looking at possible alternatives. But firm decisions need to be taken and appropriate adjustments made sooner rather than later, particularly as the minimum wage increase is imminent. Unless action is taken, St. Helena's fragile economy is set on a trajectory to crash in the not too far distant future, and this would have disastrous consequences. So please let us do all that we can to prevent this from happening, and let's try and develop strategies which will help to decrease the impact of inflation and also to raise the level of disposable income that individuals have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Honourable Karl Thrower.

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I obviously wasn't gonna do this part but I will explain what I said earlier. So I stated that going into the general reserve is reckless, and I thought that the way that we're spending money is reckless. I stand by that, I was asked to withdraw it, I stand by it. Let me explain to you what actually, when you consider what was said around this table today from both sides, including what the Honourable Dr. Essex said, you know the trajectory of the budget is going one way. We all know that. The general reserve the airbag, the airbag is now nearly gone. And I agree that the UK Government is supposed to meet our reasonable needs, but we now know that it doesn't. You know I agreed and I never spoke out against the idea of doing a zero-based budget because it was a good thing to do but it was a long shot, we knew it was a long shot. But now we have the answer, 5% and as the Honourable Councillor Robert Midwinter said, 5% with inflation is 8.2%, so we know that is a fact. Now we also know for a fact that obviously good news for a lot of people, we've put the minimum wage up but look at how much it increased the government spend last time we put the minimum wage up. Now people need a living wage, which is exactly what Dr. Essex said. You know people cannot afford to eat so much and that now, its very important. We have a litigation process coming, as the Chief Minister said, quite rightly. We know there're a lot, we don't know yet how much its gonna cost, it could be a bottomless pit, we don't know how long they're gonna come for. You know and maybe I was harsh, but what I see is, I think I see things just slightly different to everybody else. When Minister Brooks announced a while ago that in order to help lower the cost of internet provision to households, he agreed that the government would keep the cost at a certain level. We couldn't afford to do that, I'm sorry but I just don't understand, we're taking the brunt. This is about failures within the services. You know the clarity on what caused the 8.2% inflation is very clear. Its energy should have been fixed 2022, well before this government but let's face it, we probably could have done more by now. Telecoms was well within this government that caused the inflation, the cost of the work was listed in the inflation paper, linked to ingredients and high energy prices, and the cost of animal feed for meat we can't do anything about, that's about the price is right and shipping costs rise and things like that. To say that we can't do anything is wrong and I'm really worried because I didn't speak out against the Appropriation Bill, because I actually agree with Martin Henry. This stuff is really important. I understand it but we are spending money we simply don't have. The projectory that we are going hits next year. You know you gotta look at it, we're gonna have increase of course to government costs. The Port petrifies me. You know the running cost of the Port really worries me. I went into a place to have a look around, on a site visit for another reason, and you've got one room with 200-watt high bay lighting. We do not have those costs on our current port. The fact is that the Rupert's Port is gonna cost a lot more to maintain and run than the Wharf. Once again, we've just been talking about the lack of money. The Bulk Fuel Farm is going to cause the same problem. Theres no doubt the Bulk Fuel Farm is going to be a lot more expensive to run than the current Fuel Farm and these things worry me. Now I know I've just said it badly but I do believe we're on a reckless path and I'm sorry if everybody doesn't see it quite as strongly as I do but I genuinely worry about how, what we're gonna do next year. You know because the simple fact is, I've mentioned this in a meeting of the Councillors before, you know we're really gonna hit the wall I think. You know thats without the litigation case, which will now cover. But even with just the spending trajectory that we're on, we're gonna hit a wall and then we've got things, expenses coming that we know are going to be a serious amount of money. We can't control them, they're coming. I genuinely don't know what happens if you can't afford to pay them. Maybe thats a question I should have put in, is what happens when we simply don't have the money to pay for litigation cases. So, I am sorry about that.

Now what I wanted to speak about in my adjournment debate, I will speak about and is much more positive. So, also, I keep saying the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex. The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex did note too the fact that the, there's a working group going on which I'm honoured to be a member of, for the Wharf development. And I think Gilly Brooks also mentioned it. But that is why I'm really worried. We've got three public consultations; I've been to all of them. So we did the fishermen and boat owners on Monday night, we did Jamestown on Tuesday night, we did Longwood last night, tonight we're up at the Kingshurst. So that is really good, people are really respectful of that project. So obviously, we have to be very honest and we do say what we've done and this has been led by the Honourable Mark Brooks. So that is good news. You know the public engagement is still there. When we're talking about things like developing the wharf, people are really engaging with the group, so that's really positive. And the other positive thing, I will mention is, that the eight plots obviously now from buyer, at Bottomwoods is really good news. I believe last time we spoke there was two prospective enquiries but they weren't developing. So, it is not all bad news. Maybe my statement was harsh, but I am extremely worried by it. And I think generally someone else said no adjournment debate, I think we all feel the same way, maybe I'm just a bit more rough around the edges.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Anyone else wishes to speak? Councillor Elizabeth Knipe, I do beg your pardon.

The Hon. Elizabeth Knipe –

I rise to support the adjournment. From my perspective, I want to say it's been challenging, being in this position and I've listened to Councillor Essex, I've listened to Councillor Coleman, Councillor Thrower, Councillor Midwinter, and what they have said, I don't want to reiterate, because it's fairly similar to what I picked up as well. And I just want to say that it is an honour to be amongst this Ministerial group and to be able to help the community. Other than that, that's all I can say. Well done to everybody who's working together as a team and also from the outside perspective, we also need public participation as well. That's also very important. We can't do our jobs without the public supporting us. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Did I see your light Honourable Minister Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the adjournment. First of all, I just like to address Councillor Turner's comments, when he said about the audit and Ministers' when we don't have the respect for scrutiny and so forth. I don't think that's correct at all. Basically, I don't think that Councillor Turner has an appreciation for reputational damage to SHG. You know we have a right to interject where we see fit, and this is a judgement call from Ministers. People need to know the facts. If it's done later, they're not gonna believe, we need to do it at the time. But also, I will remind Councillor Turner of our rights, you know. We have a right and it's called freedom of expression and we can express ourselves. The other point he also mentioned is about the roads and so forth. As I remember, we've been through the roads and we've exhausted all scrutiny on the roads. All I'm concerned is, pretty much in terms of the roads part of it, we just need as Members to work together and basically stand up and tell people what it is. You say we never mentioned roads, I did a whole piece on roads in terms of the Castle Gardens and that was what we were talking about. So, in terms of scrutiny, I respect scrutiny and I hope there's gonna be more scrutiny, especially in terms of this. In my debate

all the evidence I have, so you can have all the evidence and I like to see scrutiny done in this area. The other part I have is, I note today that I have put forward a motion for debate in respect of the fisheries audit, I provided background and was able to provide evidence for my statement. Some of the statements I made could seem to be hard hitting and targeted at the Public Service and others. Mr Speaker, I do not make such statements unless I can justify what I has to say. Also, later on with the third supplementary appropriation, a member made an alarming statement to the effect that there was reckless spending by Finance. The Member did not ask questions during committee stage to scrutinise and demonstrate there was in effect some justification for the statement, I would just say, Mr. Speaker, all Members have papers prior to this meeting, and I will see the reasons, and will see the reasons for the supplementary appropriation. I would suggest that Members read the papers before making outrageous statements in relation to certain matters, especially where they do not have the evidence for such statements. I appreciate now that he is talking about the budget in general going forward. However, we were talking about the supplementary appropriation at the time, so that's why it's been totally misconstrued. But my Honourable Member did say before, probably a bit rough around the edges, so we'll accept that. In respect, Mr. Speaker, of budget settlement received, I am grateful, bearing in mind what is happening in terms of the UK and global context, Mr. Speaker. However, we have stated our case and done all we could to try and secure funding to meet our reasonable needs. Therefore, I believe we are in a better position should we be litigated, as we have informed the UK of our position, and the UK has obligations under the 2012 White Paper to ensure our reasonable needs are met, and as well as contingent liabilities for the Overseas Territories. Mr. Speaker, it is what it is, and we need to all work together - government, private sector, third sector, and the general public, to make the best of what we have been given. Mr. Speaker, no doubt, I will have more to say on this at the budget session. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much Honourable Member. Anyone else?

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Mr. Speaker, may I rise on a point of clarification, just because one of my statements has been slightly misinterpreted. I am allowed to under Standing Orders. It's just to clarify.

The Speaker -

You are allowed to, but every Member has the right to say what they say, and they are protected from by saying it according to the Constitution. I'd like to hear what you going to say.

The Hon. Andrew Turner -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to point out that at no point was I questioning the Honourable Minister's right to say what he said. We have the right to say what we like. That does not necessarily make it right to say it. But I will make that very clear now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Okay. Thank you very much. I see two, no, I can't allow you to come back Honourable Member. Honourable Martin Henry.

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I like to rise in support of the Adjournment Debate. I originally wasn't going to say anything, but there's been a couple of things going around in my head for

the last couple of weeks, which I think I have to sort of get out there simply because I'm working with the numbers, and today we're talking about budgets and numbers and supplementary bills and all of this bit. And it would appear to me, after serving four years in this government, that even constitutionally balancing the budget seems to be the most important thing in the world. To be honest, and to be quite frank, because 99% of the developed countries don't or unable to, I can't see why this is a serious objective. And I first of all have to, just you know hold my hands up and say that our accounting officers, such as the Financial Secretary, and they are obligated by the constitution to balance the budget. So, they are obligated sometimes to make some of the most difficult, or bring some of the most difficult decisions to us to make, regardless of their own personal opinion. So sometimes I think we lose track of the fact that a lot of these people are also our community members and are trying their best. They are obligated by their roles. But today I like to speak about what I think is far more important than money and the budget, and that is our current population. I have been studying those graphs on my wall for the last four years, and I have added a bit more over the last couple of months because I am really feeling this whole depopulation of Saint Helena. I am going to say a couple of things today, which may not be liked by the British Government, but I'm going to say them anyway. But I just want to point us to the fact that there are other small islands around the world that is receiving budgets from the UK government that are also going into the dark. They are going into the dark. Saint Helena is going into the dark. We cannot hold the British Government to account for going for us going into the dark, they are supporting us, and that will be their arguable case. But it is the case that I now do believe that we are. We are because if we look at our population census and we if we look at those very top numbers, okay, when we talk about an ageing population, that doesn't mean that that line that shows a decrease is going to go down in a linear fashion, it's going to mean at some point there's going to be a huge piece missing off the top. I can't find the right words to say that, but it's going to come off the top quite quickly. It also means that in just about one generation, we probably won't have enough children on this island to sustain it. And I look at this by looking at my children and looking at, and the generation I'm talking about is their children. Two of my children are old enough to have kids, and if they do, they probably will represent the last feasible population for Saint Helena. I want all of our members around this table and in our community to be well aware that we are about 22 years away from an absolute collapse. We can argue and discuss and debate all of sometimes these minor details that we do, but I think it is important that we all realise what is at stake here, and what is at stake is centrally in and itself as we know it, and as we have decided to live, work, and stay here. I won't go any further because there's a lot more numbers rolling around in my head, and I may get myself in trouble with some of the things I say. But the reality is that is at stake. There is two things: Saint Helena government should provide the opportunity. People also need to take the opportunity. There is this really, really poorly defined line by who should do what on Saint Helena, and I think we need to get to the bottom of that before we move forward, because it isn't the government's responsibility to do half the things I hear. It also isn't individuals' responsibility to do some of the things I hear they say. I think we need to see where those lines are. Tourism is something that I have seen firsthand, where we can do more as a population. But we are pointing our fingers at what is SHG doing. We have to get past these points. We have to work together, and we have to move on them. I'll leave it there, Mr. Speaker. But I just want people to bear in mind that the numbers that are rolling around in my head and the statistical analysis that I have done personally, shows that we are going to be in a dire situation if we don't stop bickering about the small things and start moving forward on these really big things that sits right in front of us today. We are one generation away. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Absolutely. Thank you, Honourable Member. Thank you very much. Anybody else? So therefore! Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the dot of 4 p.m., we are bringing to a close another Adjournment Debate. As I try and do every time I stand to respond to the adjournment debate, I will try and go into some order. It is good to hear my elected, my, sorry, Honourable colleagues speak about constituency meetings being productive and the engagement with the community continuing. I will say at this stage that now that we know what our financial settlement is for 2025-26, we've now said that we would like to move very quickly with the work that needs to be done, which, as I would like to reiterate again, is not going to be easy, because although it's a 5% increase, we've all talked about what that means for us in real terms. And also highlighting the fact that what this government asked for was 16 million pounds. So, the disparity between it means that there's going to be some very hard decisions to come. I'll try and mix the hard with the smooth and the happy with the sad, I guess.

The Governance Review will be taking place. The team will be back on island very shortly, and I'm guessing we will all be engaging with them, and I'm assuming that, that will also happen with the wider community. That is important if we are to strengthen the way in which we do business here under a Ministerial form of Government. I thank all the Members, because I'm not going to do it individually, who's mentioned the big radical changes, I guess, that we've done through education review and the primary reorganization. And I thank you for your support, but also, I thank the public, the teachers, everybody within Education who's done such a magnificent job for putting out what was not an easy decision. But similar to what my Honourable Minister Henry has just mentioned, we have to do something because a declining population calls for it. And if we want to try and sustain our population, but also encourage development for our young people, education is the place to start. Careers Fair was another positive point put over, so I have to say my portfolio Education Skills and Employment, I'm pleased that they're getting the recognition they so well deserved, because it was not easy having to pull together Careers Fair, as well as doing the education review and the primary reorganization all at the same time. So, I am grateful to everybody within the portfolio. We talked, sorry Honourable Robert Midwinter mentioned the audit reviews, and I'll say the both, because I think you made mention of both of the fishing and the telecoms. And I think there are some hard lessons that need to be learned from this in how we improve the way in which we communicate, the way in which we engage with our investors and ensure that whatever frameworks are put in place, whether legal or otherwise, ensures that everybody is protected, and it demonstrates that we're willing to move forward. I think you mentioned, Honourable Rob Midwinter, about the Elected Members' expenses being more definitive. I have no objection to that, and it's pleasing to hear that the Clerk of Councils is potentially working towards that. I won't put any date on you, Anita, but because I know it's a lot of work to be done, but I have no objection to any of that. Mention was made of the loan balance recoverables, and I know that Finance has now got, fingers crossed, a full team. So, I know, I shouldn't say I'm guessing, I know the Deputy Financial Secretary is looking to do more work in those areas now that he's finally fully staffed, which has taken nearly three years to get there. Mention was made of the cruise ship and how successful these could be, and actually what a revenue generator it could also be, but we need to seize the opportunities. It comes back to what Minister Henry has just talked about. Sometimes the opportunities knock softly. It's up to us as businesses, government, or individuals to take those opportunities when they are there. I know there's been a lot of talk about the minimum wage, and I fully appreciate, as I think it was the Honourable Gillian Brooks who mentioned, we need to strike a balance. Everybody's kind of mentioned something about it, and that's exactly what we had to take into consideration.

Obviously, employees would like to see a larger increase, and then you have the business community who say, well, I need to afford to be able to do it unless I'm going to do redundancies. So, we have taken both sides of the coin, and on that, I'd like to also thank the Financial Secretary and our Social Policy Planner for doing all the consultation that was done to be able to allow this Council to make an informed decision. Mention was made about the six formers. I think it was the six formers, yes, Honourable Robert Midwinter. I'm not going to make any promise standing here today. We have heard now we've got a budget, but it's not a significant increase, and all of these changes would take more money. So, I note what you've said. I won't commit to anything. I'm not entirely sure if the Attorney General will make mention of the Legislative Program. I know it's been mentioned time and again, and I can vouch for the fact that our legal drafter, along with the AG, was making huge steps, and we had hoped that there would be something here to share with you today, but at the same time, litigation hit, and they have been tied up now with that, which has become a priority. So, I don't know if the AG would like to speak to that later, but I do know that that's the state of play.

Moving on to some of the things that Honourable Gillian Brooks spoke about. Again, the Education is featuring high, and it's all positive, and I'm pleased for that. You spoke of the Education review, you also spoke about the awards ceremony, along with others. So, as I said, this is what we were asking for, for education and our children to be one of our top priorities, and from what the conversations heard or the discussions heard here in adjournment, it would seem that there is a change and a shift to ensure that we look after our young people, which is indeed, I am grateful for. It was also nice to hear some praise going for other teams within the Public Service who have difficult jobs, as we have difficult jobs taking financial decisions that affect the jobs that they do. So, thanks for doing a shout out for the government building maintenance team, the roads team, the waste management services team. It's just good to know that everybody's recognizing the work that they do. I have to give you credit, Honourable Gillian Brooks. I love the fact that you've acknowledged the constraints on the budgets and the work that they do within those constrained budgets, because if we could give them more, they could do more. So, I guess when Minister Henry was talking before, we are a team, and without the budget to be able to do all of these things, it is hard when I hear Public Service are being pulled down because we expect so much more from them, and they don't have the budgets in which to work within, and also then the staff capacity. Not suggesting there can't be any improvements, by the way.

Wonderful to hear that the Jamestown Wharf development consultations are also attracting quite a lot of attention and some good feedback. I look forward to hearing more of that through Minister Brooks when it gets to that stage. The Honourable Andrew Turner, you mentioned about public transport, and I know somebody else, I think it might have been Honourable Karl Thrower, I can't remember but, and the introduction now of including Blue Hill. I will use this to support Central Support Services and the, what are they, the public, the government garage, what are we called? The Transport Services, thank you, because I know that Mrs. Carol Henry and Nicholas George up at transport, they've got their own jobs to do, and then they're trying to obviously implement and embed the public transport service. Blue Hill is a good news story, and I hope that the pilot three-month scheme will go well, but I would like to just say to the public that we will be reviewing the whole system. We said we were going to do it, and we plan to do that and potentially have an update before we leave office, but we are also reviewing the data on other areas that might not be as positive, so it might mean that we'll have to pull some of those routes and utilise them in routes that we know could be more successful. So just to give a heads up that that might come.

The Honourable Andrew Turner talked about Ministers or the Government attacking the scrutiny process, and I know that the Honourable Minister Ellick has addressed this. I would just like to talk to why I made a comment and fed into it for similar reasons that Minister Ellick

has said. We understand it is an independent function for the External Audit to do such, and I have no issue with the PAC doing their role, but this document goes public today, and if we as Ministers don't speak about the work that we had done to try and address this, that's what I talked about with regards to report. I don't think it was objective across the piece of who should have been asked questions to be able to put into that report to make it more complete, and I will stand by that position. In no way am I suggesting that the PAC shouldn't be scrutinising the report. Knowing also that we are talking about an industry that has been the topic of much discussion over the last four or five years, I think if that report had gone out without us saying anything, it would have suggested that we were 100% supportive of the report. I do also think, though, because it was mentioned here about, I'm not suggesting that the language potentially used to address the Honourable Ronald Coleman was indeed the best, but what I will say is we, as Elected Members, all have a responsibility to communicate to the public the facts of the public purse, and at times, I have to say, I don't think that's been done by the whole 12 Elected Members because for some of the things that, I'm not suggesting questions shouldn't be asked here, but noting how we've spoken today about how we're eroding our reserves, for some of the questions to say, what are we doing about this, this, this, and all the rest of it, we are not doing anything about it because we simply don't have the funds to do it. So, I think that's where the frustration kicks in, especially when we're continuously repeating the same things over and over again.

The Honourable Ronald Coleman, you mentioned the Waste Management Service, but you also mentioned Bunkers Hill, and I have to be really careful how I speak about this. All I can say to you in this House is that Executive Council is dealing with this issue and monitoring it very closely, and I would hope that we would soon be able to give you another update as to where we are. But it is now very much a big business of Executive Council, and the reasons why we have closed Executive Council, it is because of confidential matters, and that is one of them at this particular time. You talked about telecoms for the future. I know that we did speak about the consultation that's now starting. We have a deadline to meet, and I feel as if I've said this in public domain before, but if I haven't, we are working really, really hard now to get the ordinance through, and we'd like to get that done by the end of June, bearing in mind that our current provider, their existing license with us, runs out at the 31st of December this year. So that is another thing that we'd like to be able to complete before we leave office. I also would like to highlight, we have never at once said that tourism is the only revenue driver, never. It is probably one of the leading drivers, but as we've all talked about here today, we need to be very innovative in our thinking and start looking at what other areas we can do, because tourism won't fix everything. And I've heard a lot here today about the balance that needs to be struck, with eroding revenue, reserves, sorry, it is really, really hard when we're being pushed not to increase fees and charges, but yet we are expecting to increase revenues. And the only reason we're having to increase revenues so desperately is because the settlements we are receiving does not match our expenditure. So, I think what I'd like the community to know is if it continues on this trajectory, we are at a point we will have to cut what isn't seen as services that are, what's the word, statutory, thank you, Minister Scipio. So with that said, I would also like to just say to the Honourable Corinda Essex that I understand inflation, undisputable income is having a negative impact. I don't unfortunately have an answer for you today, but I do know that Minister Brooks and his team are working hard to look at tax and revenue regimes and how we can be a little more innovative. It is difficult because generally to be able to implement such, costs money, to be able to make money, and it takes time and at the moment with our reserves so low, we can't take the risk. That's extremely hard at the moment.

Honourable Karl Thrower, I think everything you said about the reckless spending is fitting in some areas. I don't think it was fitting for the supplementary. That's all I'll say on that. So, I won't labour the point. Some of the points you made about the port, I wouldn't be able to tell

you what the specs are to it. All I will say though is that it needs to be to international obligations, and that comes at a cost. So, this is the fight we are always having with the UK Government. You wish for us to come up to international obligations, but we need the funding to go with it. I think Minister Ellick is probably blue in the face for saying those, because most of the things with international obligations comes under his portfolio. I do however believe that putting forward a modified zero-based budget, which you've said also, was the right thing to do, because at least now we can hold onto that and say, like I think it was Minister Ellick mentioned, that this is what you were told. And I fully understand and appreciate where the UK Government is at the moment, but if we start saying we need more and more money because of litigation or we're cutting services, they should know why that is happening, because we just cannot operate, what we're operating today if we're going to have an eroding budget. Mention was made on the renewable energy as well, and I've just asked my Minister for ENRP, and she said, because I'd already spoken with the Minister, and I believe her portfolio is looking to prepare an update that will now be put in the newspapers to talk about how we are progressing there, because I think we all would like to see the cost of electricity come down, but there again is a process to be followed to be able to get us to our end goal. I think that is all I have to say, other than to say as much as we may not be jumping up and down in excitement around the outcome for the budget, I think we must, however, recognise that in this financial climate, we must consider the fact that at least today, as the Minister said, with our eroding reserves, at least we've got some comfort knowing that we're moving into the new financial year with a budget already on the table. I will endeavour, as I said before, to ensure that you are updated as soon as we know, have had initial discussions. I can tell you those initial discussions will start as early as next week because of formal LegCo happening, and we only knew about it last evening. So Ministers will be banging their heads next week to try and work out how best we can do this. I have nothing else to say, other than to say I think some great information went into the public domain today. AG, I don't know if there's anything that you'd like to add regarding the Legislative Programme, or if I've actually covered it. Have I covered it? Go ahead, speak.

The Speaker –
Yeah.

The Hon. Attorney General -

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say just two or three words in relation to some of the remarks made today. I've just sent a copy of the latest Legislative Programme, the latest excel spreadsheet to the Chief Minister. There are some 38 items of legislation on that list, of which 55% are marked as green. In other words, we think they are making the expected progress. About 15% are marked amber, so obviously that's, there are concerns in terms of there is extra work that needs to be done. And the remainder, of course, are marked red. Most of those red matters are noted as that we in Chambers are awaiting instructions. So, I just make that observation. As you'll appreciate, and you'll realise, of course, with the Communications Bill having just gone out to public consultation, that has been an enormous piece of work that has been done. Whilst we've had support from external drafters, that has required significant work from one of our colleagues in Chambers. I know full well that she has been working consistently over both days of the weekend to achieve what has been achieved. In other words, I'm saying to you that I have resources which are exhausted and are exhausted as human beings as well. So, we have to be careful about how much work we are expecting. You'll know from other discussions that the litigation load on the Attorney General's Chambers is significant, and it's only going to get worse in terms of the significance and the volume. And I think we are not at peak work for the Attorney General's Chambers at the moment. I think that's going to come

in the next two months or so. So, if you thought resources were stretched for us before, you ain't seen nothing yet. And none of this gives me any pleasure to mention it to you, but it's important that you appreciate just how stretched we are, and just how fast we are attempting to work and that brings worries of its own just in terms of how accurate is our work. We think we're pretty good at the moment in trying to keep the quality up but do bear that in mind, the greater the pressure you put on us, the harder it is for us to achieve the quality of work that is required. And we know from some of the earlier debates we had today, that may be some issues associated with that, lurking behind some of the problems. And I won't say any more than that, I think that you've touched on them in your earlier debates but thank you all very much. And I have to go from this august body to Ascension's Council in 10 minutes.

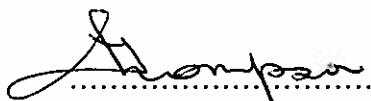
The Speaker -

Wow, thank you very much Acting Attorney General. Hope your work is going well in the UK, and hope the virtual worked out well for you today. I'm glad we were able to do that. But so, one or two closing remarks from myself. And I said to a couple of colleagues yesterday, that when the Chief Minister responds to the adjournment debate, she doesn't actually have to respond to everything they said. And in fact, I've been around a long time and in fact, I can remember adjournment debates that had little response at all, very little response. And so, it's come a long way up to now. And so, it's a lot to respond to. So, I appreciate all that you said today, madam. Thank you very much. But we are eroding our reserves. I think those words are going to be around for a while, aren't they? But thank you, thank you to SAMS for broadcasting the proceedings today, and I hope they are going to be rebroadcast. I think it was Councillor Coleman who mentioned about the waste collection. I'm glad that you actually mentioned that. I actually took a photograph of somebody actually in the bin, in this great big bin over by St. James' Church. He was in the bin to pick up the little bits and pieces to throw them out, because people hadn't put the stuff in bags, you know. And they said to me, "how about this, Mr. Speaker"? I said, "well, you're doing a great job" and waste management, they do, do a great job. If anything actually works within Government, it is waste management. But thank you all very much. Now, just a little bit about pressure in the Legislative Council office. We had a couple of things brought to us only yesterday and expected it to all be put on the table for today. It took a lot of work to get that done. It was actually last-minute work. And I congratulate the staff for actually getting it done. And sometimes, you know, I'll mention one thing, because there was a written question to be answered. Written question. That written question took a staff member many days to get the information together. I'm saying many days, because of the work that they had to do to get the information. It's put on the paper here for you all to see. But to get that information took many days to get that done. So, you know, there's a lot of people doing a lot of work, and we need to appreciate them more. But a lot of good stuff was said today, wasn't it? I know we all want to go home now. But thank you all very much for this. And all I can do now is say that the motion is that this House adjourns Sine Die

Questions put and agreed.

The Speaker -

Thank you all very much. Have a good rest of the day.


Honourable Speaker

.....17 July 2026.....
Date

