



Constituency Meeting Notes – Half Tree Hollow Community Centre

Date: 3 August 2026

Chair: Hon. Derek Thomas

Attendees: 21 Constituents

1. Welcome

The Hon. Derek Thomas welcomed residents to the HTH Constituency Meeting and thanked everyone for attending. He advised that Detective Inspector Annabel Palmer was present to provide an update on the Police Service's recently launched community policing engagement.

2. Community Policing Engagement

Detective Inspector Annabel Palmer explained that the Police Service was seeking to attend more constituency meetings and become more directly involved in understanding what communities expected from their police service. She noted that the Service had undergone considerable change and that there remained a strong focus on becoming more community focused. A key priority was to increase the number of local people joining the Police Service, although recruitment of suitable local candidates remained challenging. Residents were encouraged to consider policing as a career opportunity.

Inspector Palmer outlined improvements to the police recruitment and enhanced vetting process. The Service had strengthened its vetting arrangements to ensure that greater consideration was given to applicants' backgrounds and suitability before appointment. She emphasised that officers were expected to uphold the Police Service's code of ethics and put the community first. The discussion recognised that, within a small police service, the conduct of an individual officer could have a significant impact on public confidence.

Residents asked about the treatment of applicants with previous convictions. Inspector Palmer explained that applications were considered individually and that a previous conviction did not automatically result in exclusion. The nature and seriousness of the offence, the circumstances surrounding it and the applicant's subsequent history would be considered. She indicated that offences involving sexual violence or domestic abuse would receive particularly careful consideration because of the nature of police work.

The strengthened recruitment process was discussed further. Inspector Palmer explained that the Police Service had taken greater responsibility for shortlisting applicants rather than relying solely on the initial HR screening process. The longer-term strategic objective was to develop a fully Saint Helena police service over a ten-year period, with Technical Cooperation posts ultimately being replaced by suitably trained local officers where possible.

The issue of officers who had previously served on island was also raised. Inspector Palmer acknowledged that it was not possible to retrospectively apply every aspect of the new vetting process to people already appointed but explained that work was being undertaken to strengthen legislation and information-sharing arrangements so that relevant information could be acted upon if subsequently identified.

Residents asked about local officers progressing into specialist policing roles. Inspector Palmer confirmed that one local officer had moved into CID, reducing the number of Detective Constable Technical Cooperation posts from four to three. She explained that developing detectives locally could take longer on St Helena because the island does not experience the level of serious and complex crime scene elsewhere, but the Police Service was looking at a more appropriate professional accreditation for overseas territories. The intention was to replace Detective Constable posts with local officers progressively over the next ten years.

The importance of funding and succession planning was highlighted. Residents noted that it was not sufficient simply to state an intention to localise posts through the Police Service's localisation strategy. Residents emphasised that succession planning required a clear funding mechanism and that the transfer of TC funding into local posts should be considered strategically. Inspector Palmer agreed that appropriate investment would be necessary. She also described work undertaken to strengthen local specialist capacity in relation to the

management of sexual offenders, including overseas training funded through the International Police Assistance Service.

Inspector Palmer advised that she was happy to facilitate greater engagement with CID, which she acknowledged was sometimes a less visible part of the Police Service, so that residents could better understand its role and the work being undertaken.

A resident queried the implementation of the taxi licensing and Public Service Vehicle policy, noting that the relevant legislation had been passed and a policy established but seeking clarification on whether the policy was being implemented in practice. It was noted that the matter may previously have been raised through the Safeguarding Board. The Police representative undertook to check the current position and report back to the Hon. Derek Thomas, who would provide the information to the resident. **Action**

The community policing section concluded with the Chair thanking Inspector Palmer for attending and responding to residents' questions.

3. Review of Action Points from Previous Meeting

The Chair advised that the previous constituency meeting had been held on **18 February 2026** and proceeded to provide an update on the matters raised at that meeting.

3.1 Airport Disruption

An investigation into the previous airport disruption, when the fire tenders were unavailable and the airport was out of action for approximately two to three weeks, was progressing. An investigator had been on island for approximately two weeks and was expected to complete the investigation and submit a report to Government.

3.2 Sewage and infrastructure

The Chair reported that funding had been identified in the current financial year for the sewage project. The project had progressed to the tender stage and was intended to enable houses already prepared for connection to be connected to the system. It was also expected to support the Comprehensive Development Area in Half Tree Hollow, which was understood to contain more than 60 plots.

Further discussion later confirmed that residents wanted clarity on whether plots would be fully serviced and whether the sewage system would have sufficient capacity for future development. The Chair undertook to obtain further information where necessary. – **Action**

3.3 Technical Cooperation posts and succession planning

The Chair reported that discussions had progressed on the localisation of Technical Cooperation posts. A paper was being prepared to examine whether funding currently attached to TC posts could be released to support succession planning and the development of local staff. It was recognised that not every post could necessarily be localised, but that there were positions where suitably qualified Saints could be developed to take on the roles. The subsequent discussion emphasised that the funding associated with TC posts should be viewed as an opportunity to invest in local succession rather than simply as a reduction in expenditure. The Chair confirmed that the paper was being drafted and would be shared once the details had been developed.

3.4 Medical referrals and hospital facilities

Additional funding had been identified for medical referrals. It was also reported that Government was considering increasing the number of NHS placements available for patients travelling to the UK from the current ten to twenty.

The need for an accessible toilet and shower facility in the hospital/mail section was also revisited. The matter had been raised previously, but no funding had yet been identified. The Chair confirmed that he and Councillor Clint Beard had continued to pursue the issue, particularly given the difficulties that elderly patients could experience in accessing existing facilities.

3.5 Telecommunications

The Chair advised that the telecommunications project was progressing and that Government was working with a provider, with the intention that an agreement would be completed by the end of the calendar year. The proposed service was expected to deliver significantly faster mobile and home internet speeds.

Residents stressed, however, that improved speeds would only be meaningful if services were affordable and accessible across the community. Questions were raised concerning pricing, the length of the proposed agreement, regulatory arrangements and the terms that would be contained in the relevant licence. The Chair confirmed that these concerns had been noted and would be fed back to the group leading the negotiations.

3.6 Renewable energy

The Chair reported that approximately £6.4 million had been allocated through EDIP funding towards renewable energy. The initial phase would focus on expanding solar generation and battery storage, with further phases potentially including wind generation. The investment was intended to increase renewable generation and storage and contribute to stabilising energy prices.

Residents sought clarification on the percentage of renewable energy that the project was expected to achieve and the timescale for delivery. The Chair acknowledged that he did not have the precise percentage figures available and undertook to ask the Minister responsible for the project to provide a clearer public explanation. -

Action

3.7 Land Development Control Plan

The Chair advised that the Land Development Control Plan was due to proceed to public consultation, with the consultation expected by the end of November and completion anticipated by the end of the financial year. Residents were encouraged to participate in the consultation, particularly in relation to land release, development opportunities and affordability for Saints.

3.8 Casual work and apprenticeship scheme

The casual work and apprenticeship scheme was revisited. The Chair confirmed that Councillor Clint Beard had resumed work on the matter and that discussions had taken place with a view to progressing the scheme.

3.9 Traffic and parking

The Chair reported that revised traffic regulations had been approved by Executive Council. Further work was required to update the Highway Code and introduce a fixed-penalty system, with a group expected to progress the work towards implementation.

3.10 Public toilets and youth facilities

The issue of additional public toilets remained under consideration, including the facility at Harlyn. The Chair also provided an update on youth facilities, advising that New Horizons had agreed to make part of its facilities available when not being used by younger children, with a programme being developed.

The possibility of obtaining funding to upgrade Half Tree Hollow Community Centre was also acknowledged, with the Chair confirming that he would continue to see what could be done.

3.11 Fisheries

The Chair advised that the fisheries review was nearing completion, with the outcome and next steps expected to be communicated publicly.

4. Topics Raised

Following the review of previous actions, residents were invited to raise additional matters.

4.1 Tobacco, Vaping and Social Media Legislation:

A resident sought an update on the progress of legislation relating to tobacco and vaping, noting that work had been undertaken on the matter previously but had not progressed to implementation. The discussion also considered proposed legislation relating to social media, particularly in relation to younger children. It was advised that concerns around social media had recently been raised and that the Minister for Education was leading work in this area. It was recalled that related legislation had previously been close to implementation but had not progressed. No specific timetable for introducing the legislation was provided, and the matter remained with the relevant Minister for progression.

4.2 Renewable Energy Targets

Residents queried if the renewable energy was still expected to achieve 80% by 27/28. The Hon. Derek Thomas advised that he did not have a confirmed figure or timeframe at the meeting and therefore did not wish to provide

inaccurate information. He undertook to ask the Minister responsible for the project to provide a further update to the public on the anticipated renewable-energy targets, timeframes and the progress of the project. **Action**

Residents advised that the road to the solar farm was damaged last time and would consideration be given to repairing it. **Action**

4.3 Telecommunications

Residents reiterated that the telecommunications project should prioritise accessibility and affordability, rather than focusing solely on headline internet speeds. Concern was also expressed about the duration of any future contract and the need to ensure that the licence terms protected the interests of the island. The Chair confirmed that the concerns raised would be recorded and passed to those responsible for the negotiations.

4.4 Land, housing and affordability

A substantial discussion took place concerning the availability and affordability of land and housing. Residents expressed concern that land intended to provide affordable housing could ultimately result in properties being sold at prices beyond the reach of local first-time buyers. The need to give appropriate preference to Saints and first-time buyers was highlighted. Residents also raised concerns about the process for identifying housing plots, noting that when a resident identifies a suitable plot, it must subsequently be advertised publicly, creating the possibility that the resident who originally identified it may lose the opportunity to another applicant. The Chair encouraged residents to participate in the forthcoming Land Development Control Plan consultation so that concerns around land zoning, land release and affordability could be considered. It was recognised that the Plan would have implications for development for many years and therefore needed to reflect the needs of the local population.

The discussion also linked land availability with succession planning and the ability of younger people to remain on island, build homes and participate in the local economy.

4.5 Playground and community facilities

Residents raised concerns regarding the condition and maintenance of playground facilities, as well as the need for appropriate toilet provision for children. The Chair confirmed that there was a budget for playground maintenance and undertook to inspect the facility and pursue the concerns raised. - **Action**

4.6 Walkways and street lighting

The proposed walkway from the shop towards the lower area of the district was discussed, residents queried why the Longwood walkway was approved and not the Half Tree Hollow district if both business cases was submitted. They requested a check be made with the previous Councillor to ensure a business case was put forward. **Action**

It was confirmed that no funding had been allocated for the walkway. However, the Chair indicated that additional street lighting might be achievable and undertook to pursue this as a possible improvement. **Action**

4.7 Public transport and concessionary fares

Residents raised concerns about the cost of public transport, particularly for elderly people and those on limited incomes. The Chair advised that Government had approved concessionary travel for people aged 70 and over, with the implementation details still being worked through. Residents queried if it was ethical for just 70 and over, and if there was a policy. Residents questioned whether the support should be extended to vulnerable people more broadly, including those from the retired age of 65.

The Chair advised that a review of the Basic Island Pension will take place during the calendar year, as well as work on the Tax System, partly in response to concerns about the cost of living and the ability of lower-income households and pensioners to meet increasing costs.

4.8 Child benefit and policy transparency

Residents questioned whether proposed changes to child benefit would have a greater impact if eligibility were extended to a wider age range rather than concentrating increased payments on a smaller group. Residents also recommended that instead of increasing the benefit in year two, perhaps the age limit should be raised, to ensure continued support. The Chair acknowledged the suggestion and agreed that it could be fed back. **Action**

A broader concern was also raised about the need for clear and stable Government policies, with residents seeking greater transparency around the rationale for decisions and the basis on which particular groups receive assistance.

4.9 Government and private-sector wages

The meeting discussed local wages, recruitment and staff retention. Residents expressed concern that people could leave the island or move between employers because of differences in pay and conditions. The discussion recognised the importance of investing in local staff while also acknowledging the pressures that higher Government salaries can place on private-sector employers, who must remain competitive to retain their employees.

The broader issue of low wages, disposable income and the sustainability of local businesses was considered, with recognition that increasing wages could provide greater spending power but could also increase costs for businesses.

4.10 Warehouse and package charges

Residents raised concerns about new charges associated with warehouse and package services. Questions were asked about the basis for the charges and the contractual arrangements with the service provider. The Chair undertook to investigate the matter, including what was contained in the contract and whether additional costs should properly be passed on to users. **Action**

The importance of providing clear information to the public about charges and the financial implications for residents was emphasised. The matter was taken away for further investigation and clarification

Closing

The Chair asked whether there were any further matters to raise. With no additional substantive issues brought forward, he thanked residents and other participants for attending and contributing to the discussion, and the meeting was brought to a close.