

Constituency Meeting

Sandy Bay Community Centre
Thursday – 13 August 2026 at 7:30 pm



Chair: Councillor Clint Beard

Present: 10 Constituents

Secretary: Anita Legg

In Attendance: Inspector Jonathan Thomas

Recording: Meeting recorded

1. Welcome & Purpose

The meeting opened with a welcome from Cllr Beard, who thanked residents for attending and explained that the meeting would provide an opportunity to engage directly with the St Helena Police Service. Inspector Thomas was introduced to lead the initial discussion.

2. Community Policing Engagement

Inspector Thomas provided an update on the current position of the Police Service, which currently has limited resources and is seeking to increase the number of local recruits. A ten-year strategy is in place to increase local participation in policing, with consideration also being given to sending recruits to Gibraltar for training and exposure. The community was encouraged to promote policing as a career and to encourage suitable local people to apply. Staffing gaps continues to be addressed through overseas recruitment and temporary arrangements. A permanent Chief was expected to be appointed, in December.

A significant part of the discussion concerned the introduction of fixed penalty notices, with parking enforcement expected to be one of the more visible areas but also including other areas such as noise disturbance. The proposed system would require appropriate signage, road markings and other infrastructure to be in place before enforcement could be applied consistently. Communications would be undertaken to explain the fixed penalty arrangements to the public.

Residents raised concerns about the availability of parking in town, congestion, clarity on loading and unloading, taxi parking, pick-up and drop-off arrangements, and the practical impact of parking enforcement on businesses and residents. It was noted that the Highways Authority was responsible for parking infrastructure and was reviewing parking spaces, signs and markings.

Action: Inspector Thomas to publish the draft schedule for new road traffic signature

Inspector Thomas also outlined the wider community role, including cooperation with road and safety teams. Residents were encouraged to report issues through the appropriate channels so that matters could be passed to the relevant teams for action. Road safety, speeding and enforcement were also discussed, emphasising the importance of improving road safety through education, appropriate equipment and, where necessary, enforcement.

Cllr Beard thanked Inspector Thomas and he then left the meeting.

3. Review of Action Points from the Previous Meeting

Cllr Beard provided an update on matters raised at the previous constituency meeting. He confirmed that follow-up had been undertaken on several issues, which remained subject to funding, departmental planning and coordination. Progress had been constrained in some cases because the new financial year's budgets had only recently been approved on 20 July.

3.1 The issue of bus shelters at Bamboo Hedge and Milestone previously raised by the community was revisited. It was confirmed that the matter had been raised although funding remained a constraint but would be followed up again. **Action: Cllr Beard**

3.2 The Sandy Bay beach access road and associated toilet facilities remained particular concerns. Cllr Beard advised that he had raised these matters with the relevant tourism, roads personnel and government departments and had been seeking progress following the approval of the new budget. The condition of the beach road and toilet facilities was acknowledged as an issue affecting both local residents and visitors. Continued engagement was therefore considered necessary. **Action: Cllr Beard**

3.3 The proposed playground improvements were also discussed. It was clarified that previous funding had been allocated for playgrounds but had already been used, meaning there was currently no identified funding available for the proposed additional swings. There was need to clarify the lease arrangements with SHAPE and ensure that community use of the playground was not adversely affected. **Action: Cllr Beard**

3.4 The meeting also revisited the need for a toilet facility near the playground. It was acknowledged that the absence of toilet provision was a practical deficiency, particularly for families using the area, and suggestions included incorporating the Community Centre toilet into a public facility.

4. Topics Raised by Constituents

Cllr Beard outlined the funding for the 2026/27 budget starting with Central Support portfolio, new initiatives, TC funding etc. The following arose from discussion:

4.1 TCO

Constituents asked who monitors the TC officer's productivity and noted this falls under the responsibility of the Chief Secretary.

4.2 Cost of Living and Fuel Prices

Cost of living pressures were a major concern. Cllr Beard said Members had discussed this last week, such as the recent increase in fuel prices and the wider impact on transport, electricity generation, businesses and household expenses. He is also asking Connect whether lower users could have different rates to alleviate pressure on vulnerable households. It was noted that the existing approach to fuel pricing may need to be reconsidered in light of changing economic conditions and emphasised the importance of planning ahead for possible further increases.

4.3 *Impact of electricity bills and introduction of monthly billing by Connect.*

Concerns were raised that residents were unclear about whether they could continue paying quarterly and about possible penalties for late payments. Cllr Beard had emphasised with Connect the need for clear public communication and residents were also encouraged to monitor their meter readings and query bills that appeared significantly different from expected consumption.

4.4 *Renewable Energy*

The future of renewable energy was discussed in the context of reducing the island's exposure to fuel-price volatility and should initially be seen as a means of stabilising electricity costs and reducing dependence on imported fuel. 80% is no longer happening but possible additional solar capacity, battery storage and improvements to the existing renewable infrastructure were being considered by SHG.

4.5 *Taxation and Social Benefits*

Residents raised questions about the tax threshold and whether future changes could provide greater assistance to lower-income households and families. Cllr Beard advised that the tax threshold would be among the issues considered in preparation for the 2027/28 Budget, with an emphasis on ensuring that support was directed towards vulnerable households rather than disproportionately benefiting higher earners.

4.6 *Child benefit, Income-related benefits and Pensions*

Concerns were raised about whether the existing structure provided sufficient incentives for people to remain in employment, particularly where benefits could compare favourably with low-paid work. The need to ensure that support reaches those who genuinely require it while maintaining incentives to work was highlighted. Discussion was also around apprenticeship allowances for 16-year-olds and residents were encouraged to make enquires on top-up allowances at **Tel: 22605**.

Action: Cllr Beard to obtain accurate information on the relevant benefit rates, in particular how child allowance is distributed to unemployed mothers and potential unfairness.

4.7 *Education, Vocational Training and Youth Employment*

Considerable concern was expressed about the current education reorganisation, including the pressure on teachers, staffing levels and the condition and capacity of school facilities. Residents questioned whether the current primary-school arrangements were delivering the intended benefits and whether Education needed to go back to the drawing board. Cllr Beard acknowledged the concerns and stated that further questions would be raised through the appropriate channels.

4.8 *Vocational education*

The need for greater emphasis on vocational education and practical skills was strongly raised. Participants felt that some young people were being directed towards academic pathways when their interests and abilities were better suited to trades and practical employment. There was support for improving opportunities for apprenticeships, workplace experience and vocational training.

Action: Cllr Beard to follow-up with CASH regarding improving the facilitation of work placements for future school-leaver groups.

4.9 Transport for students undertaking vocational programmes

This matter was raised, particularly where existing arrangements appeared to favour academic students. The matter had been discussed with the Minister responsible for Education in connection with the post-16 policy review, and further clarification was awaited.

Action: Cllr Beard to follow-up on post-16 policy review

4.10 Employment and Benefits

The meeting considered the need to create more opportunities for young people and to encourage greater participation in the workforce. The possibility of expanding casual work opportunities (through Employment Rights Committee), including work such as road and grounds maintenance, was discussed. The importance of better coordination between government departments was highlighted so that people receiving benefits could also be supported into suitable employment where possible.

Concern also raised on the unfairness of policies that allow employees over age 65 to receive BIP in addition to earning a salary.

4.11 Community Facilities and Infrastructure

Residents raised concerns regarding playgrounds, toilets, bus shelters and other community facilities. The discussion highlighted the need for maintenance and refurbishment, while recognising the financial constraints facing government and community organisations. The importance of protecting community access to facilities and clarifying responsibilities for their maintenance was also noted.

Transport, Freight and Airport Matters

4.12 Questions were raised regarding public transport and the suitability of buses for different areas of the island. The cost of providing additional buses and the limitations of some newer buses in reaching certain locations were discussed.

4.13 Airport operations and possible diversions to Ascension were also raised. Cllr Beard clarified that, to his knowledge, no flight had requested a diversion to Ascension during the period discussed and cautioned against relying on inaccurate or speculative information. The airport's ring-fenced budget and the costs associated with maintaining air services were also noted.

4.14 Freight costs were discussed in relation to international fuel and shipping conditions. The increased cost of containers and the decision to space vessel calls further apart were explained as measures intended to reduce the immediate impact of higher freight charges. It was noted that, if fuel costs stabilised, vessel schedules could potentially return to a more frequent cycle.

4.15 Telecommunications and Digital Infrastructure

The state of telecommunications and internet reliability was raised. It was reported that work was in its final stages to address the arrangements for telecommunications services. Concern was expressed that short-term contracts did not provide sufficient incentive for service providers to invest in infrastructure. The importance of a sufficiently strong licence and regulatory framework to hold providers accountable and ensure that the island benefited from the service was emphasised.

4.16 Returning Saints

It was noted a survey was currently out on International Recruitment Strategy, focusing more on local Saints.

4.17 Other Matters

Discussion also centred around the budget for the control of whiteweed; clarification on how the private sector hiring operates; and plans for improving Jamestown Wharf.

Closing

The meeting concluded with an acknowledgement that a number of issues raised required continued engagement with government departments and service providers. Cllr Beard confirmed that the matters raised would be collated and followed up, particularly now that the new financial year budgets had been approved and he would report back as further information became available.

Cllr Beard thanked constituents for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.45pm