

Minutes of the Meeting of Executive Council held on Tuesday, 30th March 2021 at 9.30am in the Council Chamber

Present: His Excellency the Governor (Dr Philip Rushbrook)
The Hon Chief Secretary (Mrs S O'Bey)
The Hon Financial Secretary (Mr D L Richards)
The Hon Attorney General (Mr A T Cansick)
The Hon C R Beard
The Hon C G Buckley
The Hon A A Green
The Hon L A Henry
The Hon D F Thomas

In attendance: Clerk of Councils (Mrs C C Johnson)
Head of Corporate Support (Mrs C A George)

OPEN SESSION

100.1 Welcome

The Governor welcomed all to the meeting.

100.2 Proposed Minimum Wage Increase and Draft Minimum Wage Policy for the Financial Year 2021/22 (ExCo Memo 19/2021)

The Senior Economist, Mrs Amanda Curry Brown and Councillor Russell Yon, in his capacity as Chairman of the Employment Rights Committee, were in attendance for this item of business.

The Chairman of the Education and Employment Committee (E&EC) introduced the Memorandum asking Council to consider and advise whether:

- a. An increase of 7p per hour to the Minimum Wage to take effect from 1 July 2021 should be approved; and
- b. A draft Minimum Wage Policy, which sets out the principles for a longer-term path to a more ambitious Minimum Wage that will benefit workers and provide adequate time for businesses to plan and adapt should be approved.

The Chairman of the E&EC advised that the proposed Minimum Wage increase and Minimum Wage Policy were endorsed by the E&EC at their meeting on the 17th March 2021. He further explained that the Employment Rights Committee had worked extremely hard on the Minimum wage review which started in October 2020 and the main issue raised during the Public Consultation meetings was that generally the public felt that the Minimum wage is set too low.

The Chairman of the E&EC advised that the 7p increase suggested would raise the Minimum Wage to:

- a. £3.25 per hour for all employees having attained the age of 18 years and
- c. £2.30 per hour for all employees having attained the age of 16 and 17 years.

The Chairman of the E&EC said that when the Minimum Wage is approved by Executive Council then businesses are given three months' notice to put in place measures to comply with the new Minimum Wage which means the change would take effect from 1st July if approved by Executive Council before the 31st March.

The Senior Economist added that some employers had also advised that their business can only absorb limited increases but they are pursuing a different approach now and engaging more with businesses in this process. The Chairman of the Employment Rights Committee echoed his thanks to all involved in the process and reported that concerns had been raised from some owners of Crèches and even the Chamber of Commerce had a split between those in favour of the increase and those who were not but it was generally felt the proposal was fair.

Members were content to support the increase in the minimum wage as proposed and also said that the Employment Rights Committee should be commended for their input which secured a positive outcome in challenging times.

One Member queried the minimum wage increase against the rate of inflation; the Senior Economist replied that the Employment Rights Committee had considered different factors and this increase also included the difference not incorporated from last year's increase and pointed out that at this point in time some businesses were unable to afford anything more. She added that there was a need to change people's mind-sets going forward and mentioned that she had been in discussions with the Social Policy Planner regarding this issue as well.

Following discussion, Council advised and the Governor agreed, that an increase of 7p per hour to the Minimum Wage to take effect from 1st July 2021 should be approved; and the draft Minimum Wage Policy, which sets out the principles for a longer-term path to a more ambitious Minimum Wage that will benefit workers and provide adequate time for businesses to plan and adapt was also approved.

(Action: Hon Chairman of the E&EC /Clerk of Councils)

The Governor thanked the Senior Economist and Councillor Russell Yon for the Policy and clear picture that had been set and at this point, they left the meeting.

100.3 Recognition of Exceptional Service – Proposed Badge of St Helena and Honorary Citizenship designation or Freedom of the City of Jamestown (ExCo Memo 20/2021)

The Chief Secretary introduced the Memorandum asking Council to consider and advise whether:-

- (a) the draft criteria for the proposed Badge of St Helena as set out in paragraph 4.1.1 below should be approved and incorporated in legislation;

- (b) the proposed Honorary Citizenship designation should be replaced with a symbolic “Freedom of the City of Jamestown” for both St Helenians and non-St Helenians;
- (c) and if so, whether the draft criteria for a “Freedom of the City of Jamestown” as set out in paragraph 5.3 below should also be approved and incorporated in legislation;
- (d) and if not, whether the draft criteria for an Honorary Citizenship designation as set out in paragraph 4.1.2 below, should be approved and incorporated in legislation.

The Chief Secretary explained that a few issues came up in discussions because Members were of the view that only people and not businesses should be awarded the badge so this adjustment was made. The Governor remarked that this would now be a local award.

The Chief Secretary also apologised for an error in the Memorandum; under point 5.2 it stated that “Jamestown is not a city” she confirmed that designating Jamestown as a City was correct. The approved proposal when incorporated into legislation would put this matter on a legal footing.

One Member also pointed out a typo in the Memorandum; under point 17 whereby it was stated that “One Member was not in agreement with having two awards for non-St Helenians and one award for St Helenians” and reported that there were a number of Members who were not in agreement with having two separate awards.

Members were content to support the criteria for the Badge of St Helena and Freedom of the City of Jamestown for both St Helenians and non-St Helenians.

The Chief Secretary advised that she also had a meeting to update the Honours Committee and seven entries had been submitted for the Competition for the design of a new Badge which would go forward for judging soon. It was noted that Legislative Council Members were still to be nominate a Member to sit as a Judge on the Panel.

Following discussion, Council advised and the Governor agreed, that the:-

- a) draft criteria for the proposed Badge of St Helena as set out in paragraph 4.1.1 of the memorandum be approved and incorporated in legislation;
- b) the proposed Honorary Citizenship designation should be replaced with a symbolic “Freedom of the City of Jamestown” for both St Helenians and non-St Helenians; and
- c) the draft criteria for a “Freedom of the City of Jamestown” as set out in paragraph 5.3 of the memorandum be approved and should now become incorporated in legislation.

(Action: Hon Chief Secretary/Hon Attorney General/Clerk of Councils)

100.4 Any Other Business

100.4.1 Next Steps for Governance Reform

The Governor advised that a meeting for the next steps relating to the Governance Reform would be held on the 30th March and they would be looking to identify the strands of work to be taken forward along with the Remuneration Committee, updating of Rules and Procedures including connections with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and he would keep Members updated on progress.

The Hon Derek Thomas asked if there was a timeline attached to this; the Governor responded that this would be discussed at the meeting.

The Hon Lawson Henry enquired if the Draft Constitution could be shared with a wider audience; the Attorney General replied it was not a public document and it had been shared with all Members at the end of 2020 and would be sent to the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office and when returned shared once more with Members.

P. Rushbrook
Governor

U Johnson
Clerk of Councils
16.04.21

16-4-21
Date