



ST. HELENA

GOVERNMENT OF SAINT HELENA
PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
MONDAY, 18TH SEPTEMBER 2016
FIRST SITTING OF THE SIXTEENTH MEETING

Laid Upon the Table 9th December 2016

ST. HELENA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE SPEAKER

The Honourable Eric William Benjamin

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

The Honourable Acting Chief Secretary	-	Mrs Gillian Francis
The Honourable Financial Secretary	-	Mr Dax Richards
The Honourable Attorney General	-	Mr Angelo Berbotto

ELECTED MEMBERS

The Honourable Cruyff Gerard Buckley
The Honourable Wilson Charles Duncan
The Honourable Gavin George Ellick
The Honourable Dr Corinda Sebastiana Stuart Essex
The Honourable Lawson Arthur Henry
The Honourable Brian William Isaac
The Honourable Christine Lilian Scipio O'Dean
The Honourable Bernice Alicia Olsson
The Honourable Mike Olsson
The Honourable Derek Franklin Thomas
The Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce

The Honourable Cyril Robert George (Overseas)

CLERK OF COUNCILS

Ms Gina Benjamin

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Monday, 19th September, 2016

The Council met at 10.00 am
in the Council Chamber, Jamestown

(The Speaker in the Chair)

ORDER OF THE DAY

1. FORMAL ENTRY OF THE PRESIDENT

2. PRAYERS
(The Right Reverend Bishop Fenwick)

3. ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT

Honourable Members, members of the public, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the sixteenth meeting of Legislative Council. May I first thank the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of St Helena for opening our meeting with prayer. May I also thank our Clerk of the Councils and our team, including our Secretary, along with the team from St Helena Media Services for their valuable support to this Council in preparation for this meeting today. I am pleased to see that our regular Mace Bearer, Mr Legg, is back to his regular duties after his recent surgical experience.

Honourable Members, it has been only two months since we last met here in formal session, but this meeting is necessary today as a result of the sad resignation of former Deputy Speaker, Cathy Hopkins, and the need to fill the vacancy that has arisen. Mrs Hopkins has serviced this Council effectively over many years, first as a Councillor, later in the positions of Speaker and Deputy Speaker and I've had the pleasure of working with her throughout that time. She has also been a pillar of support to me in my role as the Speaker, taking on tasks that lightened my load, particularly during my period of ill health. Honourable Members will know that Mrs Hopkins resignation was because of her failing health conditions. I know that Honourable Members will want to join with me in wishing her a speedy recovery.

I have great pleasure today in welcoming the Honourable Cruyff Buckley to his first formal meeting of this Council and I congratulate him on his successful election. I wish him well in his career ahead of him and pledge him any support he might require in this new and important role that he has undertaken.

I welcome to Council the Honourable Acting Chief Secretary, Mrs Gillian Francis, who has taken up this position during the absence on leave of the substantive Chief Secretary and wish her well.

We are deficient in number by one Honourable Member today, namely the Honourable Cyril George who had taken overseas leave to accompany his wife on medical referral. An application has also been received from the Honourable Gavin Ellick who will shortly be taking overseas leave on medical referral and I wish him a speedy recovery.

As I have said earlier, this meeting's main purpose is to fill the vacancy that exists in the position of Deputy Speaker and it is pleasing to note that interest has been shown and it is believed that nominations will come before this Council today. It might be useful at this time to mention that the qualifications required for eligibility for election to this important position is contained in the Constitution of St Helena and supported by the Election Ordinance. The process for election is set down in Standing Orders of this Council. Nominations will be invited and the nominees will be permitted to address Council for up to five minutes after which election will be by secret ballot.

Honourable Members, our Order Paper today contains just five other items of business, one of which is a late Motion to which I have given approval for it to be placed on the Order Paper. This is not to be taken as establishing a precedent and, of course, it will still need the approval of this Council to proceed. I shall seek such approval at the appropriate time. Our meeting will conclude with the adjournment debate and Honourable Members will recall that our Standing Orders restricts speeches to a time of ten minutes for each member and confine topics of discussion to that of public affairs of St Helena. I wish Honourable Members well in their deliberations today and call on the Clerk of Councils to announce the next item of business. Thank you, Honourable Members.

4.

ELECTIONS

Election of Deputy Speaker

The Speaker –

Election of Deputy Speaker. Is there any nomination for the election of a Deputy Speaker?
The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I propose Mr John Gilbert Cranfield.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there a seconder to the proposal?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Mr John Cranfield, do you accept the nomination?

Mr John Cranfield –

Mr Speaker, thank you very much, I do accept the nomination.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much indeed. Are there any other proposals/nominations? Honourable Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Mr Speaker, I wish to nominate Mr Cyril Gunnell.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there a seconder to the proposal? Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Mr Cyril Gunnell, do you accept the nomination to the post of Deputy Speaker?

Mr Cyril Gunnell –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I do.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Is there any other proposal for Deputy Speaker? No other proposals. Alright, Honourable Members, it seems that we have two nominations for the post of the Deputy Speaker. In that event then I shall allow the nominees to speak to Council for five minutes and I have to take them in the order of their surnames first and I think that's Cranfield first, will you come here Mr Cranfield, if you bring your chair if you like or you can stand and address, would you prefer to sit?

Mr John Cranfield –

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, and dare I say future colleagues, many thanks indeed for giving me this opportunity to address you on the matter of my nomination for the election to the post of Deputy Speaker of the House. Mr Speaker, you've given me five minutes of uninterrupted time to present my case as to why I wish to serve you as your Deputy Speaker. Like the principle Speaker's office, the office of Deputy Speaker is a high profile position and undoubtedly requires substantial leadership skills, all of which I have achieved throughout my professional career in the public service. I started my career in 1972 as a Customs Clerk and in 1979 was promoted to Senior Customs Officer and Harbourmaster within the then Treasury Department. In 1989 I was further promoted to the post of Information Officer in the Office of the Chief Secretary, being responsible for the editing and distribution of the island's weekly newspaper and the efficient and effective operations of the St Helena Radio Station then at Pounceys. In 1992 I moved to the Economic and Development Department in the capacity as Building Inspector. My duties were the responsibility for ensuring the safe erection of all construction work in accordance with the Building Regs and any conditions that was laid down by the Planning Authority. In 2000, the opportunity arose for me to move into the Public Works and Services Department as Senior Transport Manager responsible for providing and maintaining an efficient and effective transport service to all Departments throughout the Public Service. I held this position until April 2009 when I retired from the Public Service having served in Senior Management positions which enabled me to gain a wealth of leadership skills and qualities. In November 2009, I was elected to the prestigious House of elected members of Legislative Council

during which time I was appointed Chairman of the Access and Transport Committee. I was also appointed a member of the Finance Committee, Public Works and Services Committee and the Home and International Committee. It was, indeed, an honour and a pleasure to serve on these four important committees. For the last ten plus years I served as a Justice of the Peace. However, in accordance with the Constitution, it was necessary for me to resign from this position to enable me to run for the office of Deputy Speaker. Without jeopardising its integrity and credibility I now wish to continue to pursue my political career with fervency and zeal by becoming an integral part of the administration and operations of the long-standing protocols of this Honourable House and its members. I do understand the importance of having the Legislative House conduct itself in a professional manner benefiting for all to have a say. I care passionately for this island of ours as undoubtedly you all do, otherwise you would not be seated here as Honourable Members. I have a happy disposition, I am approachable, I enjoy interacting with my fellow islanders and I am honest and steadfast in all tasks which I undertake. In brief, being a good listener, responding to what I hear and giving guidance and to support the principal Speaker will be my mainstay as Deputy Speaker when called upon. I will close with a quote from the Honourable Cathy Hopkins – “Am I listening, am I hearing, am I responding to what I hear? Am I offering the island the leadership it needs to bring change for the good?” Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, these are my sentiments exactly and should you choose me as your Deputy Speaker, we can achieve all as a team together for the future prosperity of our island. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank you once again very much indeed for giving me the opportunity to address you all. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Mr Cranfield. Thank you. Can I now call on Mr Cyril Gunnell?

Mr Cyril Gunnell –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, you allow me five minutes and I will try to keep within that. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the position of Deputy Speaker would allow me closer involvement with mainstream politics instead of just through peripheral contact. Through a Committee system, the main functions of the Legislative Council are to enact, amend or repeal laws, examine and approve budgets, taxation and public expenditure and raise questions on the work of the Government. I am fortunate to have participated in all of these. The Speaker presides over many debates on much of the aforementioned and the Deputy Speaker's role is to assist with discharging the Speaker's functions. I believe I have the strong character and charisma necessary to carry out those duties and if I am called upon to make comment I can draw on many years of practical experience for that. I am aware the Deputy Speaker may not take part in the proceedings at which the Speaker is presiding, but I feel the Speaker would allow me to make constructive input if he thought it would clarify an important point. Of course, the Deputy Speaker must adopt an impartial approach. Mr Speaker, I am very passionate about our island's politics and how they affect our people, I joined Legislative Council in 1991 to try and make a difference and have never regretted that decision because it was possible to do so in certain circumstances. I was a member of the Executive Council twice, chosen to chair the Employment and Social Services Committee and Health and Social Welfare Committee; I led the public consultation process on the Tobacco Control Bill and Social Security Bill and presented those to a formal Legislative Council for debate and subsequent enactment. Indeed, I am grateful for the wide experience gained on a number of Committees and Boards, including Education, Tourism, Finance, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Fisheries and ..?.. ..?.. Also from representing St Helena overseas at OTCC, Small Countries and BIMR Conferences in some cases leading discussion

on selected topics. I have also represented our island at the EU Conference in Bonaire. I am a great believer in open government and accountability. Mr Speaker, I am fully conversant with our Committee system, but I've also observed Ministerial Government in the British Virgin Islands through meetings with their Governor, Deputy Governor, Ministers, Attorney General and Speaker of the House, an invaluable experience sponsored by the FCO. I believe that Civil Society and economic development plays an important part. In this regard I am pleased about my participation with the Citizenship Commission in St Helena's fight to restore British Citizenship and likewise the Chamber of Commerce on which I was Vice President for a year.

Mr Speaker, time does not allow for telling about my educational or employment pursuits, both here and overseas, but suffice to say they have a bearing on my all round experience. Presently I am Chairman of the Prison Business Committee and statute Public Accounts Committee in which I have also chaired a formal session. I'm aware that some of my involvements may not be compatible with Deputy Speaker duties; I am prepared to make any adjustments necessary.

And finally, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am conversant with our Constitution, the preamble and partnership values, Standing Orders of the Legislative Council and Councillors' Code of Conduct, all of which are important documents and guidelines assisting the work of the Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Mr Gunnell. Thank you. Right, Honourable Members, at this part of the meeting we have to get the Clerk of Councils to issue ballot papers and you will mark an x alongside the person who you desire to be the Deputy Speaker of this Council. I will give you some time and quietness for that. The Clerk of Councils will come back and collect from you and the election takes place only among the elected members; I'm sorry about that official members. Put an x alongside of the person who you desire to be elected as the Deputy Speaker please. The Clerk is required to collect the ballot papers and shuffle them when she gets them on the table here before opening them and counting. Thank you, Clerk of Councils. Shuffle them on the table.

Before I tell you the result here at the moment, I want to explain to you that even though one of the candidates might get a majority of the votes that person still has to get the votes of the majority of all of the members of the Council which means to say that I have to put it to you as well if they don't reach that and the majority of all of the members of the Council means seven votes.

So the result of the vote is, Cyril Gunnell – 5; John Cranfield – 6. John Cranfield came out as the top candidate here, but he will still require the consent of the Council until I can get a number of seven. Okay, congratulations on coming out at the top vote. What I would do is to put it to the Council that John Cranfield is to be elected as the Deputy Speaker of the Council having the greater amount of votes here, those in favour say Aye, those of a contrary opinion, No? The Ayes have it, the Ayes have it, but I heard a dissension vote, so I will take a count around the table. Clerk of Council. Audible please?

Ayes

Noes

Abstentions

The Hon. Lawson Henry

The Hon. Wilson Duncan

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce

The Hon. Derek Thomas
 The Hon. Cruyff Buckley
 The Hon. Brian Isaac
 The Hon. Gavin Ellick
 The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex
 The Hon. Bernice Olsson
 The Hon. Mike Olsson

The Speaker –

Thank you Clerk of Councils, the Division has been called by me to ensure that we have the correct setting here. Ayes – 10; Noes – 1, so John Cranfield is duly elected as a Deputy Speaker for this Council. Your duties will not start right now, you will have to take the prescribed Oaths to the Governor and that will be done at 3 o'clock tomorrow afternoon. You can't take any part in the function until you have taken those Oaths. Congratulations.

Mr John Cranfield –

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker and thank you, Honourable Members, for trusting me and I hope to serve you well during the time that I have left, that we have left now with the remainder of this Council.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Clerk of Councils, I have to call on you for the next item of business now.

5.

MOTIONS

Motion No. 1 – The Honourable Lawson Henry. (Late Motion)

The Speaker –

The Honourable Lawson Henry? Before you move, just allow me one minute, please. Right, this is a late Motion, Honourable Members and I have given permission for it to be placed on to the Order Paper, but that does not mean to say it could be raised in this House until I have your votes of affirmation. So I put the question to you that you allow this late Motion.

Question on late Motion, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

The Ayes have it, the Motion can be moved. Honourable Member?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move THAT this House resolves that in light of the protracted delay in determining a clear way forward to resolve the inability for commercial flights to land safely at the airport and the adverse effects this is having upon our economy, St Helena Government considers setting up an independent inquiry to determine precisely how this situation has arisen and where responsibility lies. Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there a seconder to the Motion?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Mover, would you like to move?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would first like to thank all of you for agreeing to allow this late Motion on this important issue, which is perhaps the most talked about subject on the island, and, indeed, elsewhere, particularly where there are St Helenians living or those with connections with our island, not surprisingly, because of the impact the pause on commercial flights is having on the travelling public and business community on the island. Members will be aware that a Motion was carried in this House on 18th July 2016 which read “That this House resolves that the St Helena Government should, in consultation with the Department for International Development, continue to give the highest priority to resolution of the issues relating to commercial use of the airport and the provision of scheduled passenger and freight access by sea in the interim and ensure that all stakeholders are kept fully informed of developments in an open and timely manner.” I pause here to reflect on what, if anything, has changed since that Motion was passed. We know the RMS schedule has been extended and that the weekly briefings are held at which Council is represented. There is work ongoing to better understand the wind conditions that exist on the airport site. I will come back to the matter of wind conditions later.

If I am honest, very little has changed in terms of keeping all stakeholders, including the general public, fully informed of developments in an open and timely manner. In the interim, elected members have raised concerns about the release of information to the public. We have written to two Ministers and recently we did a Press Release of our own to inform the public that it would appear that the Department for International Development (DfID) is very reluctant to release information to the public, and, indeed, have blocked efforts locally. I understand, following the most recent letter to the FCO Minister from elected members about the failure to disclose information to the public and in the airport briefing from Tuesday, 12th September, it was announced that DfID has agreed to release information to the public on the airport, but to date no formal release has been communicated by SHG. The last formal Press Release on the airport situation was on 26th July 2016, more than six weeks ago. There has been much work done in the background during this period but this has, of course, been overshadowed by the lack of information to the public who has a right to full disclosure. The result is the community has lost confidence in us as a government at a time when we should all be working together. The message we are sending by this wall of silence is we do not care, but we know that this is not true. Islanders rose to the challenge to invest in businesses and were encouraged by their government to do so to make the island ready for the biggest change we would have ever seen with the landing of commercial flights. Indeed, our government committed to building a hotel in support of this great change. We were supported and encouraged by DfID to do so, including by the former Minister in a video conference with elected members back in 2014.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, what I find distressing in all that has happened and more importantly what has not happened since the opening of the airport to commercial flights is that there has been a number of systematic failings,?...ings and lost opportunity. So much has been done to gather information about the wind conditions that exist at the airport but sadly much of this was after the runway had been laid and one has to question how such a monumental project can be carried out without doing these extensive tests before. Who was

responsible for approving the final design with the current alignment without first carrying out the necessary tests to ensure that aircraft could land safely from the approach that the runway was constructed for, taking into account also that the design of the runway is to enable landings from both approaches. Atkins 2005, tailwinds of 14 knots existed. What I cannot understand either is that we were told just over two weeks ago that part of the implementation flight in April this year was part of the wind testing operations too. Really! In 2005, Her Majesty's Government commissioned a feasibility study, which I will refer to as the Atkins Report, I would particularly like to draw Members' attention to section 7.57, 7.82 and 13.113. The Consultant sets out very clearly in these sections about crosswinds at Prosperous Bay Plain and the importance of flight trialling with an aircraft of the type that was to be used for commercial flights to the island and this was to be done before the design for the chosen runway was finalised. The report goes on to say that even then further limitations might be imposed after reasonable experience, flight trialling was recommended with a chosen aircraft a number of times over a period of two months. We know this only occurred once and this was not with the type of aircraft that was eventually chosen. Section 7.82 of the Report goes on again to highlight that there is doubts concerning local weather conditions and, in particular, there are doubts about the amount of turbulence that could be expected on the approaches due to the elevated location and the surrounding bluffs. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as early as 2005 the issues of severe wind conditions on the chosen site for the airport were highlighted. This was before the final design and the alignment for the runway was determined and laid. The question therefore is why was there no further studies carried out into the severe weather conditions and the amount of turbulence that was known to exist before the final design and the alignment of the runway was finalised. This work was clearly critical to the final design and for determining the alignment to the type of runway chosen. The more recent and detailed studies into wind conditions at the airport were only carried out after the runway was laid. These are serious issues that are likely to have long-lasting and adverse effects on our economy and the impact as a result of the airport not being fit for the purpose for which it was intended is going to be felt by the whole community and already has, in particular to those brave people who took the decision, with the encouragement from their government, to invest compared to the millions that were and are being spent to attract an inward investor and we are still waiting for number one to cross the line. There is therefore an overwhelming need and the public interest demands that there should be an independent inquiry to determine precisely how this situation has arisen and where responsibility lies. I am in no doubt that officials here on the island and those in DfID and HMG as a whole are doing all that is possible to bring commercial flights to St Helena. However, it is clear that something went fundamentally wrong in the course of the construction of this airport and the public, both here on St Helena and in Britain, whose money was used to construct the airport, has a right to know what went wrong, why and where responsibility for this lies. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move and would ask you all to support this important Motion calling for an independent inquiry. Finally, I would like to thank my Honourable Colleague, Dr Corinda Essex, for her support to me in bringing this Motion and for seconding it and to the Honourable Mike Olsson for carrying out the research on my behalf and for his support. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Motion, standing in the name of the Honourable Lawson Henry, is that this House resolves that in light of the protracted delay in determining a clear way forward to resolve the inability for commercial flights to land safely at the airport and the adverse effect this is having upon our economy, St Helena Government considers setting up an independent inquiry to determine precisely how this situation has arisen and

where responsibility lies. The Motion is now open for debate and I have a list of people who wish to speak, they have indicated already, so I'll call it in that order. The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex please?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I first wish to declare my interest as President of the St Helena Chamber of Commerce.

Mr Speaker, the inability of the airport to provide a commercial service to St Helena at this point in time is arguably the most serious exogenous shock that the island has ever experienced. The reality that the airport cannot currently offer the anticipated commercial service safely became obvious almost six months ago. However, there is still no clear way forward or conclusive evidence as to if, how, when or at what cost this situation can be remedied. This is a cause of great and growing concern. Expectations of all those living on St Helena, Saints working overseas, potential investors and visitors were consistently fanned by the Department for International Development, St Helena Government, Enterprise St Helena and other key stakeholders who informed them that St Helena must get ready for the commencement of a commercial air service that would end its isolation and open it up as an exciting and unique tourist destination. The Aide Memoire of the Development Aid Planning Mission of 2013 states, and I quote, "The UK Government's investment in an airport with air access being around three years away provides St Helena with the opportunity to create a better and brighter future. This is an exciting but challenging time for the island. The impending economic and social transformation is huge". These expectations are now dashed; dreams, aspirations and even more worryingly significant investments lie in tatters. The 2013 Aide Memoire also stated, and I quote, "DfID Ministers have been clear about the deal. DfID funds an airport and St Helena does all it can over time to become financially self-sustaining and graduate from budgetary aid. This means St Helena challenging available resources into activities that permit genuine growth and greater investment while maintaining its obligations to deliver core public services to Saints and protect the most vulnerable. This year we were looking for deeper reprioritisation to align with UK ministerial expectations". St Helena, Mr Speaker, has done its best to deliver and to meet the many challenges which in some cases have necessitated significant budget cuts for important activities, such as road repair and maintenance in order to free up funding to make St Helena airport ready only to find that the wind conditions prevent the airport being ready to take the anticipated commercial flights. Once again, Mr Speaker, St Helena is left clutching the short straw, having to live with the consequences of actions imposed upon it that were hoped to bring a greater good that has not yet materialised. Mr Speaker, I do not need to state what this type of predicament does to morale. Families planning to be reunited this Christmas, in some instances after decades of separation, due to the inability of relatives to get sufficient leave to return by ship, have now had their hopes crushed and are experiencing emotional distress exacerbated by the uncertainty regarding the timescale in which a solution is likely to be found. Potential tourists have had to change their travel plans and it is likely that some have been put off ever visiting St Helena. Apart from the personal disappointment and discontent that had been caused, which must not be underestimated, the island's economy is also left suffering as a result. New businesses have started and others have invested heavily to expand their services only to find that they are getting little or no return for their efforts. Some business owners have invested their life savings while others have taken out substantial loan finance which they are now struggling to sustain repaying. Others have done both. A few are now near to bankruptcy and there is already evidence of businesses within key sectors that are closing or reducing their activities. Instead of 2016 seeing the beginning of a boom in St Helena's economy economic ruin is now staring some investors in the face. How very ironic and

tragic. Are other reputable investors, foreign or local, likely to come forward in this economic climate? I think not. Additional funding is having to be spent to meet contractual obligations with the air service provider and the company that will provide the new freight service. The further investigations being undertaken into wind shear also come at significant cost. Surely both the people of St Helena and the British taxpayer are entitled to know the truth about why this expenditure has become required. There is a need for objective, evidence-based investigation to determine the facts rather than suspicion, speculation and surmise. Alarming allegations are appearing both within social and mass media that suggests failures in processes and procedures that have culminated in the current situation. Some have even gone as far as suggesting deliberate cover-up of vital information and negligence on the part of Her Majesty's Government and/or St Helena Government. A despondent and disappointed public already starved of timely information relating to airport issues is very likely to believe such allegations and become even more despairing. Mr Speaker, this self-defeating cycle must be broken before the damage done is irreversible. In order to do so, three steps appear essential. A formal commitment needs to be made and communicated to the public that the RMS St Helena or similar service will definitely continue to operate until the airport can provide a safe and affordable scheduled commercial service. The current efforts to resolve the airport issues must continue to receive the highest level of priority with the actions taken in this regard being communicated to the public in a timely, open and transparent manner. Consideration of the establishment of a fully independent inquiry to determine how and why the current situation arose and where responsibilities lie must be undertaken. The outcome of such an inquiry would not, unfortunately, resolve the challenges facing us, however, it would provide answers to some of the many questions that currently lie festering and public expectations for probity, transparency and accountability would be met. At least it would be demonstrated conclusively that good governance and responsible action are upheld by St Helena Government.

In closing, I would like to congratulate the Honourable Mover on his high quality exposition and also to commend the Honourable Derek Thomas who represents us on the Air Access Briefing Group and who constantly brings matters of concern to our attention. Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Mike Olsson?

The Hon. Mike Olsson –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. First of all, thank you to the Honourable Lawson Henry for bringing this Motion to this House and also to the Honourable Dr Essex for assisting in this matter. I will not repeat what the Honourable Mr Henry and Dr Essex have said, I will fill in on a couple of details of a slightly different nature because they have turned up late. Firstly, according to recent information, the Honourable Secretary of State in UK has beaten this House to an independent inquiry, which is very good news and it does not take away the validity of the Motion raised here, but I can assure that the officials here can inform us further about the inquiry by the Secretary of State for DfID, that's Ms Pritti Patel that I'm referring to, she's new in her post. I also to make specify from the House of Lords on Friday where Lord Foukes raised six questions about the airport development in St Helena and these questions were answered by Baroness Anelay who is the DfID spokesperson for the House of Lords. In response to a question from Lord Foukes about detailed research into potential problems with the airport before construction started, Baroness Anelay referred only to the feasibility study undertaken in 2004, which is exactly the study that Councillor Henry brought up and correctly as he said, there were extensive testing should have taken place

before the design was finalised. In the Atkins report it says a budget cost of £500k would need to be added to cover the cost for a D 737 to fly over a number of times over a period of two months. Was it done? No. So they have jeopardised the cost, it's now up to a cost, according to National Audit Office of £285m to save £500k? Something must be wrong. Further, this extensive testing with an Air One Hercules, that is the same as a C130, but a civil version, that was never done and this was said in 2005, before the airport pause. At the same time it was said that an airport development in St Helena would cost over £300m. After the pause, DfID proudly announced that they'd got a better deal now, we're only paying £230m, that was wrong, wasn't it, because it's up to £285m according to the National Audit Office and what they cut out were absolute necessities for the successful development of the airport in St Helena. The Honourable Dr Essex has pointed out what a disaster this is for the island and we should support the Honourable Lawson Henry in carrying this Motion in the House that we also want further information, because, as I said, I think the Honourable Secretary of State in DfID has beaten us to the task, but the better that is that we give her support in her decisions to make a full inquiry into what has been going on in St Helena. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I'd just like to raise on a point of information and just to say to Members that if an independent inquiry does take place we do have to consider the resources available to do such. As you will know, the Wass Inquiry costed over £1m so I just want to bring that to Members' attention, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you. You reserve your right to speak again, as you raised on a point of order. Honourable Wilson Duncan?

The Hon. Wilson Duncan –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I commend the Honourable Lawson Henry for bringing this Motion to the House, which I fully support. I believe the people of St Helena have a right to know if everything were done that could have been done for the contract to build the airport was signed and if the situation that we now find ourselves in could have been avoided. Those businesses and individuals who were encouraged by St Helena Government and the United Kingdom Government to invest in tourism are suffering as a result of the airport's inability to receive commercial flights and the lack of tourists as promised. The question to be asked for those businesses and individuals who invested in tourism be given compensation by the United Kingdom Government as this debacle is no fault of St Helena, something I am contemplating raising in the next sitting of the House. Mr Speaker, I give my full support to this Motion.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Honourable Lawson Henry's Motion. We all know about the proliferation of experts on?.... recently but when I'm questioned by the man or woman in the street about why the experiments and data collection from wind tunnels

and the like was not part of the initial survey I confess I have no answer, because I too wonder. Most people believed that the airport would start functioning soon after completion, not just us unworldly St Helenians but in Britain as well, we even had the Honourable Royal Highness the Earl of Wessex booked to perform the opening ceremony, we had faith as we watched the project evolve, it helped to create an upbeat and positive feeling on the island. We trusted people to get the equations and calculations correct before the start of the build, we had confidence that this was being done properly as it was being overseen by Britain. The lack of a functioning airport for commercial flights to operate has an effect not just on the tourists and the tourism industry but also on St Helenians wishing to come home on holiday and visit families. I'm aware of at least one wedding that has had to be postponed due to the wedding party being unable to get the bookings on the ship or to afford the longer period of travel required by sea. There's also the knock-on effect of increased costs of having to route experts, consultants and engineers by sea rather than the quicker alternative and cheaper and also less time consuming option of air travel. I believe we also have had people pull out at the last minute from contracts because the access problem has not yet been sorted. There are other consequences to this as well. The risk to the tourism industry, as has been documented by my Honourable Friend already, the dwindling confidence in the RMS due to the timetabling only going to July. Passengers need confidence to enable them to book at least a year in advance even though the RMS is business as usual and on the surface all is functioning as before, there is now that underlying worry, lack of confidence in commercial air travel due to all the adverse publicity and questions around the safety of the airport and there's also the reputational risk to the island. My Honourable Friend has indicated that the St Helena Government should consider setting up an inquiry and I agree with him. Clearly present problems have their roots in the start of the project and I feel this would be fundamental to the success of the airport when it is eventually functioning in a more viable fashion. Do we have the capability to undertake an inquiry of this magnitude or do we instigate the inquiry to ensure that we have access, no pun intended here, to the report in its entirety? The British taxpayer needs to see that St Helena has not taken their millions just to produce a white elephant so if there needs to be more money invested to make the airport work or any other future investment there would be proper scrutiny. Future investors in the island need to have confidence that St Helena Government is a sound and a responsible Government and that we are true to our Loyal and Unshakeable motto. Thank you very much.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Mover for bringing this late Motion to the House. I believe that the first mention of an airport being considered for St Helena was in October 1943 when a Y...?... Defence Force of South Africa arrived to investigate the feasibility of building an airport. I have been told that more recent discussions on the topic were concerned about the wind and weather conditions and were the main reasons for determining that an airport for St Helena was not viable. In July 2010 the Secretary of State for International Development, Andrew Mitchell, confirmed DfID's willingness to finance an airport for St Helena which was the largest, single investment ever made to our island and we believed that technology had advanced making such an investment a viable option. In November 2015, St Helena Government announced that subject to final certification an operational readiness St Helena Programme Board expected St Helena Airport to be accepting commercial flights before the planned official opening of the airport

in May 2016. There had been no mention of wind shear, turbulence or issues with the approaches of an aircraft. In April 2016, St Helena Government announced that the official opening of the airport was postponed as further safety and operational work was required. Mr Speaker, Atkins feasibility study states “to allow a robust assessment, flight trialling of the Prosperous Bay Plain site is recommended to occur before the design for the chosen runway is finalised”. Did this happen or was this ignored? The study also mentions to flight trial the approaches to the runway using a B737. Was this type of aircraft used? Has St Helena Government with DfID ignored expert advice that has been paid from the public purse? Mr Speaker, the Atkins study includes aviation and construction technology and as a politician one would expect that the experts provide good sound advice at all times to me. Mr Speaker, every man, woman and child has invested in this airport, albeit in a small way of increased charges in St Helena Government services and budget cuts through the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding. I do not wish for the airport to become an expensive white elephant, an embarrassment to the British Government, the Mover has requested that St Helena Government considers setting up an independent inquiry. I’m not certain, Mr Speaker, what authority St Helena Government has with questioning key officials within DfID or if there is surplus funding available to carry out an inquiry, but it’s hoped that existing resources can be deployed so that the people of St Helena can be given a diary of events in chronological order. Mr Speaker, can the Acting Chief Secretary say if it is true that the UK Secretary of State for International Development has appointed an external expert to review the process that has seen a delay in the start of regular air services to St Helena? I have no intention of apportioning blame, but it’s hoped that an inquiry will highlight the facts that during the various phases I sincerely hope that Saints were only doing what they were told and not part of the decision making. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Acting Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Gillian Francis –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Honourable Mike Olsson referred to the Secretary of State appointing an independent inquiry. I understand that an independent panel will be appointed from both Government and Private Sector to find a solution to the circumstances we find ourselves in now, but, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will certainly get confirmation about this independent panel that the Honourable Mike Olsson referred to and will let Members know more information about it. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, I support the Motion and I would like to thank my Honourable Friend, the Mover, for bringing this very important Motion to the House and for all the sentiments that has been discussed around this table this morning. Mr Speaker, I was fortunate to be one of the members in the very early days, including yourself, in the preparation, the announcement and the way forward for the island’s economy to grow and the support from Britain that we should have an airport. At the time it was very controversial amongst the people of St Helena, should we continue with having sea access or should we have air access and at the time we as a Council we were able to consult with the public in telling them the benefits that the airport would bring to the island, the tourism industry would grow, the economy would grow, our medical services would be improved. All these things have taken place following

the signing of the MOU we had to, Council at the time had to make some unpopular decisions. At the moment Council have discussed the benefits from the MOU, the way forward, that is a topic on the table at the moment, the MOU. The legislation had to be changed in many areas, the support for the benefits systems had to be changed, a lot of benefits came out of the initial stage of the implementation of having air access to the island. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, we are in a very difficult position and I don't want to go into that this morning because that has been discussed by members around the table today, but Mr Speaker, the fallout from not having air access has inclined and has damaged our community, our economy. There are people out there who have prepared themselves, as was said here today, but there are also people out there, Mr Speaker, who are really suffering with the lack of financial income. Had everything gone as planned, had everything gone as Council support, had everything gone as well as the consultation amongst the public and we as the Council at the time who were leaders of the community tried to convince people in that the airport would bring such benefits to the island, today the hole is in our bucket, we've been let down through some technical advice not being followed. It was not short of reports. Within this Castle in the Administration there are loads and loads of reports that led us to making decisions to be able to support, to develop, but unfortunately we are where we are. I do hope, Mr Speaker, that this is not the end of the road for us and as said today we do hope that the airport will not be a white elephant. For those who have been to the airport, many of our people have been to the airport and it's a magnificent piece of infrastructure there. When I'm at the airport I believe, I try to convince myself that I'm not at Prosperous Bay, I'm somewhere else in one of the big airports, it's such a magnificent piece of infrastructure. Unfortunately I hope that with the work that's being undertaken in wind tunnels, the proposals on the table of removing of certain areas, I hope that it is fruitful, beneficial and at the end of the day we will be able to have air flights, commercial air flights coming into the island and the delays that we are facing now should be something of the past, but unfortunately these are things beyond our control here today and I do hope that what's been said, an inquiry into this issue and the support given to the Secretary, I support the Motion here and I thank all my Honourable Members and I'm sure that many people in the public today are listening to the radio to hear what their Council are doing for them. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there any other Honourable Member? Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will first declare my interest, I'm in the rental accommodation, but I'm speaking in the best interests of the island as a whole.

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this Motion which is highlighting the protracted delay in determining a clear way forward to resolve the inability of commercial flights to land safely at our airport and it's asking for the St Helena Government considers setting up an independent inquiry to determine precisely how this situation has arisen and where responsibility lies.

Mr Speaker, we are all fully aware of the sheer level of frustration in our community by the general public not being told what action is being taken in addressing a way forward for commercial flights. Except for information which is commercial in confidence the public has a right to know. The public will be aware that elected members have been doing all they can in pushing for a regular flow of information on what action is being taken. Those persons with the technical knowledge and background should be allowed to do this, but it appears to

have been blocked by DfID for reasons which have not been made known to this Council. It would appear that a recent petition from elected members to the FCO Minister will trigger a positive communication package to the community which will be long overdue and has led to increasing levels of frustration. As part of the Memorandum of Understanding which led to the construction of the airport, Enterprise St Helena was set up to encourage investment. In its initial stages, investment opportunities were more focused towards larger scale inward investors and despite the hard work and tremendous efforts made by Enterprise St Helena there were no success. The focus soon changed to encourage local people to invest, accommodation being the main feature, together with other local investment opportunities. We all know that many local businesses risen to these challenges and have made significant investments supported by Enterprise St Helena and in many cases the Bank of St Helena. Without regular commercial flights and an increase in our tourism industry such business will struggle and fail. The question which needs to be addressed, Mr Speaker, during this period of delay, what will be done in the meantime to help those who have invested in anticipation of the airport opening and are now losing money, who is going to provide compensation? Surely the British Government has some level of responsibility, these people were encouraged by the British Government to invest in business. Mr Speaker, as a Government, we should be pushing for support to support our local businesses and addressing what form of compensation can be made available. An investment by the British Government of a £285m in our Airport, no-one would expect for anything to have gone wrong. Before the construction phase, a full and proper assessment should have been conducted to ensure that the location was suitable and fit for purpose, not constructing the airport and realise now that we are faced with difficulties of windshear and turbulence. The proper reliable checks and data collection, all of this should have been foreseen. We must, Mr Speaker, continue as a priority to work hard with Her Majesty's Government to resolve this issue in having commercial flights operating on a regular basis for the benefit of St Helena and its people. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Member?

The Hon. Mike Olsson –

Just a point of information, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

A point of information only.

The Hon. Mike Olsson –

Yes, two things that have been raised by Councillor Duncan and Councillor Thomas. We start with the point by Councillor Duncan, Councillor Thomas brought up can be interesting to know that DfID said on Friday that a matter, enquiries from claimants seeking compensation is a matter for the St Helena Government. That includes?..... also Friday.

The Speaker –

Thank you.

The Hon. Mike Olsson –

On another point raised by Councillor Thomas, this was?.....the openness of information, especially Met Office report, DfID's view is that the St Helena Government has the

ownership of the Met Office Report and it's up to St Helena Government to make it public, not DfID.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member, thank you very much for that point of information. Is there any other Member wishes to speak to the debate at all? No, okay. The Mover, Honourable Mover?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I am overwhelmed and humbled by the support from Honourable Members in speaking to this very important Motion. I just want to mention, I take fully the information given earlier by the Financial Secretary, but in bringing this inquiry, this Government, and I mean the Councillors as well, have to take a considered view. The British Government or DfID we should say, is already paying for the sea service that was contracted and the Comair service that was contracted. What we want on this island, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, is a balance. Who is looking after our people who have made investments? As my Honourable Friend quite rightly said, the response only last Friday to a question raised in the British Parliament was that the St Helena Government is responsible for any claims that arise out of investment in St Helena, so what we want is a balance and the support of DfID in this, because it can't only be about the big contractors who got the ability probably to sue the British Government, but what about those people here on St Helena, so it need to be a balance and that balance should be in discussion with this House, not only by officials, because the British Government have already said that this is a matter for the St Helena Government. We heard earlier this year that the St Helena Government include officials and elected members of Executive Council, but we have not been included in these discussions and the amounts of money that has already been paid to the two people, the two firms who has been contracted, one for the sea service and one for the air service, so that needs some clarification, Mr Speaker, and a balance of view that supports not only the inquiry when it come to the cost but also to the people who have taken those steps and made that investment, so thank you Honourable Members for your support in this Motion and I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Motion, standing in the name of the Honourable Lawson Henry is as follows: That this House resolves that in light of the protracted delay in determining a clear way forward to resolve the inability for commercial flights to land safely at the airport and the adverse effect this is having upon our economy St Helena Government considers setting up an independent inquiry to determine precisely how this situation has arisen and where responsibility lies.

Question on Motion, put and agreed to.

The Motion is carried.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Next item of business, please?

The Speaker –

Yes, Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Gillian Francis –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this Council do now adjourn sine die.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there a seconder? Thank you, Honourable Member. The Motion is that this House adjourns sine die. The Motion is now open for debate. Honourable Mike Olsson?

The Hon. Mike Olsson –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I'm going to be quite brief, but I'm bringing up an issue, not just to bring something up in the Adjournment Debate, I'm bringing up an issue where I want to, as a Councillor, want to see a result and, of course, the result will not be in the Adjournment Debate, but I hope that notice is taken and we start on a path towards recovery in this area. I'm talking about our biggest resource on this island, we always say that the Saints is the island's biggest resource, but, yes, you've got one resource that's even more important than the Saints and that is Water. It is the ultimate resource that we cannot do without, everything in St Helena is based on that we have fresh water, we've got plenty of water out in the sea, but we need fresh water, water in our homes. To develop, we need it to drink, but we need it for ...?... use, but also we shouldn't forget that agriculture is one of the things it is said that we should hope one of the pillars of the economy. How can we have sustainable agriculture if we don't have a sustainable water supply and I'm arguing that we do not have a sustainable water supply on the island and I'm talking about the lack of knowledge of what is happening to our underground water reserve. The only hydro geological report made in recent times was the **Tullen Report** from the year 2000. What **Tullen** said was that the sustainable development of the groundwater resources using boreholes would require careful planning, monitoring and management. I doubt that this is actually being done. At this stage I should also say yes, it is Connect St Helena that is responsible for water, but I'm also saying that when it comes to the strategy of our water supplies, policies, how to develop, it rests with the members of this House. What was not included in the **Tullen Report** of 2000 was the intensive drilling and intensive extraction of water for the airport project, so going back to the airport again, that could have caused damage. There are two things, the lowering of the water table on the island, we suspected already that it is happening, there are certain springs that were giving plenty of water before days on high altitudes, they give nothing. Why? We're not exactly sure, but it is a huge risk that this comes from boreholes drilled on the lower level, so there is a risk and we don't know. The **Tullen Report** I'm saying for 2000, this hardly value at this stage. There is also the risk of contamination of sea water into our fresh water supply on the island. There's a suspicion of this already, it was noticed in several of the Basil Read boreholes which they used for the construction of the airport, they were saline in different ...?... What I would like to see, and which is urgent, is that we undertake to produce a water strategy for this island and endorse a strategy which does not include drilling for water or using our underground resource at least not until we are a hundred percent sure that we're not shooting ourselves in the foot. The risk at the moment with the island is without water, and I understand, Connect and I understand anybody else that would do it, that you pump as much as possible because people are screaming for water, but this is dangerous. We have to put up a strategy where we do more than we do now to use surface water only. I know that a new reservoir has been built up at Harpers area, I know there are plans for another one out at Hutts Gate, but there are still untapped resources, for example, Sharks

Valley, Fishers Valley, Fishers Valley does not carry?.... water anymore because of the extensive drilling up at Willowbank, but there were once plans instead of Willowbank putting a reservoir at the bottom of Fishers Valley, because there is water. There are several more places where we can use the surface water and make sure that we have a sustainable water supply. This is what I'm asking for and obviously this is not now a decision making body, because it's the Adjournment Debate, but I will continue to work for it and draw this to officials and Councillors attention, so I hope you in the future, in other forums, supporting our quest to get St Helena a sustainable water supply, because in my view, not obviously as an expert, but in my, I have strong suspicions that the current way of getting water to our households and to our homes is not sustainable. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Mr Speaker, I'd like to first rise on a point of information following on first?

The Speaker –

A point of information.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you. Mr Speaker, I believe that in fact a company was contracted to provide our water management strategy and complete the study at a cost of around half a million pounds, but that their findings have been rejected. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Should I continue?

The Speaker –

Continue with the debate.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you. Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to reiterate a concern that I've expressed already in a number of different forums. St Helena Government is now in the process of taking over and will very soon be adopting many of the airport-related assets. These will require ongoing maintenance and repair but there is no certainty that additional funding will become available to pay for this except in relation to the aerodrome itself. Unless extra budgetary aid is provided for this purpose by the Department for International Development or SHG is permitted to capitalise recurrent expenditure that does not really fit within the parameters of capital spend St Helena is going to face a huge and growing problem over the forthcoming years. Clearly it would be totally unproductive to allow valuable, new infrastructure to fall into disrepair but the alternatives of reallocating existing budget resources or increasing local revenue to meet these burgeoning demands are at best equally undesirable. It looks as if St Helena is going to again find itself set up to fail. This must be avoided. SHG is already prioritising the priorities and seriously under investing in key infrastructure such as roads because budget ceilings cannot be exceeded and the funding available is barely sufficient to address even the very highest priorities adequately. All of us

in this Honourable House today are very well aware that already many recommendations and activities that would undoubtedly benefit St Helena are not being implemented. At times the public criticises SHG because it seems that these key issues are being forgotten or overlooked but in most cases this is only because there is not sufficient money to deliver on them. I believe that there is still some wastage of money within SHG, particularly with regard to the use of transport, lack of streamlining to avoid duplication of time and effort etc, but even if this were totally eradicated the savings generated would be likely to fall far short of the expense of maintaining all the newly-acquired assets. Although revenue streams have improved in recent years no further significant increases are likely to materialise until the airport can fulfil its commercial role and even then there is likely to be considerable upward pressure on prices which will erode the benefits of this economic growth. The public is facing rising utility charges, massive increase ground rental for SHG plots, even the price of a medium loaf of bread increased by over ten percent overnight a few weeks ago. The additional costs and staff time associated with ASYCUDA are likely to be passed on to the consumer by merchants, freight charges will increase following the withdrawal of the subsidy. Mr Speaker, I could continue this list but hope that I have already made my point. There is already a sizeable sector of our community who are struggling to maintain an acceptable standard of living and this is not just made up of those who are income related benefit recipients and pensioners, it includes all those who are in the lower income brackets. Their plight must not be made worse by new revenue initiatives. Farmers, fishermen and many businesses are also feeling the pinch and as was brought to the attention of this Honourable House earlier today some are really struggling also. In this scenario how can a responsible and caring government put into force revenue increases of the magnitude likely to be required to meet the cost of repair and maintenance of new key assets, some of which are of considerable size; the Haul Road, as an example, will increase the total road network by a considerable proportion. Mr Speaker, how we are going to be able to square this circle must surely be one of the issues for detailed discussion during the upcoming Financial Assistance Mission. In the current uncertain and insecure situation negotiating an appropriate financial settlement with Her Majesty's Government is likely to be particularly challenging as there are so many unknown factors, but a successful outcome for St Helena is all the more critical. Therefore, Mr Speaker, it is of vital importance that elected members and officials work together to present the strongest case possible and can fully defend St Helena's position in order that its reasonable needs for the ensuing period are understood and that an acceptable settlement is reached. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there any other Honourable Member wishes to speak?
Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Adjournment Debate. Mr Speaker, at a sitting of elected members meeting on Friday last week where a discussion was held around the Memorandum of Understanding it was very encouraging to hear from the officials present, including the Deputy CEED of Enterprise St Helena, acknowledge that the commitments under the Memorandum of Understanding have been achieved so that bridge was crossed some time ago and it was recognised that while the spirit of the MOU should be upheld unless there are very strong justifications not to do so the document itself should not be treated as a restricting set of conditions that cannot be reviewed or updated. The MOU was signed five years ago and situations have changed in this period, therefore there will be occasions when there is clear justification for policies, legislation to be reviewed to take

account of current day issues. This position regarding the MOU is not clear with officials throughout St Helena Government as elected members when certain issues are being reviewed we are too often reminded be careful how you bring about change, you will be going against the MOU. As indicated, policies must be applicable and in tune with today's activities, not five years ago. I will therefore ask that this position regarding the Memorandum of Understanding be properly communicated to staff throughout SHG.

Mr Speaker, members of the public have commented on the recent successful visit of the Ear Specialist which was long overdue. Some hundred patients were seen out of which seventy-five were fitted with hearing aids. He also provided Nurses with training in conducting basic hearing tests and hearing aid maintenance. It is hoped that this type of visit can be made more frequently. What the public are asking if the Customs duty on hearing aids and spectacles could be reduced from 20% to 5%. Some of our people are struggling to find this money. This issue, Mr Speaker, has been supported by the Public Health Committee and will be taken forward to the next level of further investigation and discussion within SHG and Council.

Finally, Mr Speaker, in some incidences it appears that St Helena Government is not achieving value for money. For example, I have been made to understand that two employees are being sent for short-term work experience all the way to New Zealand. I'm not knocking the work experience scheme, obviously it is relevant and a benefit to their job. Surely similar training could be identified in the UK or anywhere much nearer to St Helena at considerable reduced cost? All training should be evaluated to ensure that St Helena Government is obtaining the best value for money. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise to the Adjournment Debate. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Martin Hannah who, until recently, was our Chief Planning Officer. Martin, as many will know, has resigned, so he won't be returning to the island. I did not always agree with his decisions but he made himself available and was prepared to discuss the rationale behind his decisions. Martin has worked on some of the most challenging planning applications and was much maligned, but I always found him to be diligent and professional throughout.

The competition by Enterprise St Helena for the Best Kept District has shown some remarkable results all around the island. Areas that had previously been a bit of an eyesore quite frankly have been transformed. There are plants now where before there was rubbish, bus shelters have had a lick of paint and play areas have been smartened up. People are taking pride in what they are achieving and this has infected others, even those not actively involved in the process. There even appears to be a concerted effort to use the litter bins rather than discard or abandon litter in diverse places. There are all age groups involved, from the very young to those of much brighter years. Each your heart out, David Cameron, the **big** society is alive and well and residing in St Helena.

When the Chief of Police mentioned to me he would be off island from the end of July to the end of October this year visiting Ascension and Tristan da Cunha as part of a review of policing across the territories I confess I thought, and I even said to him, nice one, Trevor, but thought there could be some justification for this, even after he mentioned his wife was accompanying him. Subsequent to this I discovered that he travelled with another TC Police Officer and will be joined by yet another TC Police Officer and one Social Worker, all on Technical Cooperation contracts. This got me thinking of what rationalisation there could be

for a party of this size to visit Ascension and Tristan. Granted there is always the curiosity factor. I, like many others before, had been curious about these islands and had planned visits to satisfy this curiosity and paid for the privilege myself. The announcements on the radio declared they were going to forge links with the islands, a very laudable objective, but somewhat insulting to suggest that no such links currently exist. There are several questions that require answers. For genuine links to be forged surely St Helenians should have been chosen to make this trip. We do have a very good local candidate who has been trained as part of succession planning. How effective are these links that are forged when one of the TC Police Officers will not be returning to St Helena but will apparently be serving final days of his contract on the journey from Tristan to Britain. What is the justification for this jaunt? Is it for a second honeymoon or maybe even a first? I think I'd quite like to put my name on that list for future consideration. Who's picking up the Bill for this? There are, of course, other associated costs other than those more obvious ones like travel. There is the loss of services of four, very expensive, TC Officers and the impact on the service provision while others struggle to man the fort for the three or so months that they are away from their posts. There is an argument too that if we are able to function without these key people for a quarter of the year then do we really need them? Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I just have one point I'd like to raise in this Adjournment Debate which I support and I discussed this with my Honourable Friend, the Chairman of the Health Committee and the Financial Secretary. A few weeks ago, Mr Speaker, some of us became aware of the situation in the Medical Department that really requires this island to have a mammogram machine and I'm unable to go into the details, but what struck me immediately arising from this case is the amount of anxiety that a woman will go through if there is suspicion of lumps in the breast and having to wait to be referred overseas. The Hospital has just undergone significant development and I understand that there is a business case that has been submitted by our Health Directorate for such a machine. Now, Honourable Members, given the importance of such a machine I would urge that the procurement of it be accelerated, no woman should have to go through the anxiety that has been explained to us just recently. I understand that the procurement would likely cost some £60k, we have a budget of I believe now £32m, it doesn't, in my opinion, Mr Speaker, allow for this machine to wait, the procurement should be accelerated, this is a right of a woman to expect to be given appropriate treatment, they should not have to wait for a referral. Such a common piece of medical equipment should now in 2016 be stationed on St Helena and people should not have to be referred for it, so I would urge the Financial Secretary to accelerate the procurement of this machine. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there any other Honourable Attorney General?

The Hon. Angelo Berbotto –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I wish to refer to comments by Honourable Derek Thomas and Honourable Ward Pearce. I remind the Honourable Members that they're subject to a Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct requires Members before they make a statement to research and to present the facts and I'm concerned that in the case of Councillor Thomas he has brought forth, he has alluded to a trip, a training trip to New Zealand, I do not know the

details of this trip, but the angle in which he has presented the information could be misinterpreted so I remind the Honourable Councillor to before bringing this information to a public forum to ascertain whether any expenses by this Government have been incurred, whether this training in New Zealand is a donation either by the Commonwealth or by the Government of New Zealand or otherwise. I am not saying that his intervention is wrong, I'm saying that when a public statement is made, things need to be researched properly, that is only fair.

The Speaker –

A point of order, you want to raise on that point.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Yes, Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order here. I do say “it would appear”, I didn't say it was happening, “it would appear”. As an elected member I have a duty to ensure that funding spent under the budget that we achieve as a Government achieve best value, value for money, that is part of my responsibility and that's what I was bringing to the attention of this House.

The Speaker –

Alright, your point of order has been made.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Hon. Angelo Berbotto –

Thank you and equally there's a responsibility to research the fact, as attained from the source before making a public statement. I am slightly more concerned about the words of the Honourable Ward Pearce, but because her comment is verging on defamatory comment in alleging that this may be used as a honeymoon trip. The Chief of Police is not here presently, I do not know what investigation or research the Honourable Ward Pearce has made before making this statement. There is one Police Officer in Tristan da Cunha, the Governor of St Helena is the Governor of Ascension and Tristan da Cunha as well and I do not know who has funded this trip but there may be a very valid reason which, for reason of the administration of justice may not have been clearly stated to Councillor but as I said again I do not know what research she has made, I invite the entire House to use restraint, to research the facts, because they are accountable for what they say. Thank you.

The Speaker –

You made a valid point there, we have to just not run willy nilly, you got to make sure check what we say because while you have privileges in the House the statements outside will have to be accurate. Pamela?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you, a point of order please, Sir. The Tristan da Cunha website I checked this morning shows that the Chief of Police, Trevor Botting is actually on Tristan with his wife and that Matt Beeze, another TC Police Officer is also there and I have information that also suggests that another TC Officer and a Social Worker was also on their way, they're travelling on a different ship, so there has been some research, Sir, I haven't looked to defend anyone, I am just merely asking the questions for the justification of this trip, especially as it was said they were forging links, I'm questioning why those links could not be forged with St Helenian

officers, especially as there is an identified officer who has been trained and is supposed to be training for succession, why, if they were genuinely trying to forge links, why not with them? Thank you, Sir.

The Speaker –

Okay, your point has been made. The points have been made, I'm not going to take no big debates on this please, you can only make points of information. You have to be accurate in getting your ideas over to the public, that's very important. In an Adjournment Debate the adjournment, the speech should be for the public affairs of St Helena, make sure that we do get that accurate, so just be very careful. Councillor, are you trying to make a point of information?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

You have to make a point of information and then sit down.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I am making a point of information. The incident I raised about training, I did my research, the Director himself said if he was responsible for this training it could have been achieved closer in the UK and a much lower cost, so that was facts that I presented to this House.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much indeed. Okay, I'm not stopping any debates whatsoever unless it gets out of control, but just check your facts and things, that's the main think, okay Attorney General? It's not a debate, what's your point?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

No, I'm not debating, Sir, it's on a different point of information, from what Councillor Lawson Henry said.

The Speaker –

Please let me hear it.

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Yes, thank you. A point of information, the incidence of breast cancer is on the increase worldwide so I think it is justified that the money has been donated from Cancer research, it's in the public arena, they have donated £20k towards a mammography machine, but I'd also like to highlight the fact that men also are at risk of breast cancer albeit at a much lower risk and furthermore the League of Friends are also making a donation towards this. Thank you, Sir.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Councillor. Alright, Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. It's not to detract from the main issues here of Council who've got a lot of important things to talk about here, but one of the issues being a top priority for me

myself, I'd like to thank the general public who has supported me in this General Election, we've had a low turnout in recent elections but I've got a good feeling that it's set to change as I hope more Saints will exercise their right to vote and build up a democratic society here on the island and I'd also like to thank these members of Council for my warm welcome I've received here and I look forward to working with you guys in the near future. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, thank you very much indeed. Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, I support the Adjournment Debate and would also like to welcome and thank my newly-elected colleague and look forward to his support and I'm sure he will get the support from his colleagues around the table today.

Mr Speaker, my colleague, Mike Olsson raised boreholes, drilling for water and there are members in this House today who will recall in the very early days that boreholes drilling on the island was very much a topic that I supported in a way of the damage to our water table and on each occasion when I raised the issue I was often shouted down by my colleagues who said that we have loads of water and it would not impact on the water table. I understand, I don't have information to support it, but some of the boreholes higher up on the island, the levels are dropping.

Mr Speaker, in 2013, there was the same situation we are now in, a drought crisis on the island and a Disaster Management Contingency Drought Crisis Centre was set up at Scotland Headquarters to the tune of some £220k. I was fortunate to visit that Centre at a particular time and found there were about twelve telephones and desks within the Centre, you know, it was really set up to deal with the situation. A Mayday call was put out to Ascension Island, we were able to, Ascension Island donated a vehicle for transporting water around the island, the Fire Service were out, they were out from door to door delivering water and there were other issues imposed through the water situation and then the rains came and the Centre closed and there were work undertaken from the investment from the Consolidated Fund, but the issues were never really answered. Today we are faced with the same crisis here. When SHG transferred utilities to Connect St Helena I was a member who stood in the Honourable House and asked for some further time to enable Council at that time to understand really what was happening with this transfer from Government to a private company. Unfortunately my voice was a cry in the wilderness, I did not get the support, but since that transfer Connect has done a lot of good things to the island, renewable energies and everything else, but what is happening, what is impacting on Joe Bloggs on the street, whenever you talk, if I go out into the street today and talk to any of my constituents they're always complaining about the cost of utilities and how difficult it is to be able to pay their bills. We've been told that with the construction of the wind turbines, electricity tariffs would drop, we were told that the renewable energies, solar farms, that utility bills will drop, unfortunately I've been told just recently that once the subsidy that is being paid to Connect St Helena is taken away we will see a decrease in our utility bills. That is not the case, Mr Speaker, because once the subsidy goes Connect will have to find monies to be able to supplement what the subsidy was doing, you know. People are really struggling out there, Mr Speaker, in paying their bills, people are struggling even to buy the necessities from the shops. People go into the shop, I've seen them, pick up something, look at the price and put it down and walk away. Unfortunately we are in this situation and we as a Council must be doing more to support these people. There was a mention here this morning of hearing aids. People are complaining, some of the hearing aids are costing in the region of £100 a piece, that's £200 for two hearing aids, people cannot afford. I'm working with the Financial

Secretary at this particular moment, I sent him an e-mail last night, we are hoping to be able to come up with some funding to support these people, but the process is taking quite some time, but, you know, it's like struggling, you know, and we have loads of money and I'm the Chairman of Safeguarding Directorate and, you know, we do have problems within the Safeguarding Directorate in identifying monies in certain areas, but it's not that we short of money, it's the way we are managing our money and I do take some credit for that and I do take some credit for not being able to support this because I am the Chairman of that Directorate.

Another issue I would like to bring up, Mr Speaker, is, I just drove into town this morning and saw the resurfacing of our street in Main Street, wonderful piece of work, but just recently, Mr Speaker, we lift all the kerb stones along the street and put in pavers so that we have gutters so that the water could run away. Now we come along and resurface it, in front of the Post Office, Mr Speaker, as you walk home today have a look, the street is almost level with the pavement. Going back to gutters again, Mr Speaker, I raised on a number of occasions in the Honourable House to have the gutters in Upper Jamestown resurfaced with manholes and underlying pipes so that our disabled people, our elderly, our frail people are able to walk down the street without having to fear the gutter. In front of Pilling School the children had to cross the street and walk down along the gutter, I've been given commitment that, yes, it will be put on the maintenance programme, it will be taken forward, unfortunately it hasn't happened. Recently we had an incident where a constituent had to have a cover over the gutter to get access to her home and then it was phone calls, e-mails, can we have this emergency pavement put across the gutter for the lady to get in and out of her house. I don't think at this day and age we should be able, and I pay respects to the Roads people and the Highway Authority, but it has been raised on a number of occasions and when you look around it is good what they are doing, but, you know, are we throwing good money away, because we now have the street almost level with the pavement and it was a lot of money put into raising those kerb stones, it was a very controversial project, but we are where we are as my colleague, Lawson Henry, would say.

And finally, Mr Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to one of our ladies who's done quite a lot for this island and that is Mrs Charmaine Swain who has recently, her contract has come to an end for her services provided to our people whilst on medical referrals in Cape Town and also to her husband Julian who was not employed by the St Helena Government but rendered his support to our people who visit Cape Town. They bent over backwards and during one particular time when I was in Cape Town a gentleman was dying, he actually died in Cape Town and Julian sat on the bed and hold that gentleman in his arms like a baby as he departed this life. They bent over backwards for our people on St Helena. I know I've heard people say Charmaine has not been up to standard, Julian has not been up to standard, but the majority of support that I've heard from people is they've done a wonderful job for this island and I think that it is worth mentioning that the support she has given has no cost to it, they went that extra mile and today I would like to pay tribute to those. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, although the airport plays a key role in development in most important players are people, the people who live on the island, who we, as politicians, represent. Many of the changes and reforms taking place are being done under the umbrella of policies in the MOU signed by the St Helena and British Governments in December 2010 connected with funding for an airport. Though there were to be reforms the document makes

it clear that the main aim is economic growth and social development. The pretext of an airport contributing to this at this current time, in my opinion, is just a dream. It has been over five years since the signing of the MOU and it is an opportune time to make our own assessment of how the policies and systems to implement them have met the overall aim and how have they impacted on the lives of the people. The timing is also opportune as we are in the process of undertaking a ten-year development plan which, in my opinion, is just a wish list. We need to assess the social and economic base of where we are now to know what we have to build on for the future. Any assessment has to consider what is achievable for a small island community. There are two important considerations that need to be applied in making any assessment. One is the status of St Helena as a self-governing British Overseas Territory having to deliver all her services of a national government such as health, education, social, police and prison, to name a few. It is my understanding that the people of St Helena were never consulted about having such an expensive and complicated form of government, it was given to us. The second consideration is the ability of an island community of about four thousand residents with an ageing population having to deliver all these services and having to pay for them. I would like to put it to this House that such demands being made on this small island community with such limited human resources are unrealistic. They would not be made or could not be carried out for what would be a village community in a developed country. These are unrealistic demands and introduced systems to implement them are creating social problems. We need to know the collective, accumulative impact of all these various reforms on the lives of ordinary people. Any assessment should include the contribution by people themselves in the development of the island, bringing it from a difficult past to its present state. It is understood that the island has to develop, but it should be done ...?... on strengths and assets that already exist, especially the contribution made by people themselves. The public has not seen both a collective assessment of the social impact on systems for reform and the added impact of a great reduction in capital aid connected with the airport. There needs to be such a comprehensive assessment in order to successfully plan for development, looking after the interests of all our people and safeguard against impending social problems. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Is there any other Honourable Member wishes to speak? You would like to wind up the debate, please, or would you like some time?

The Hon. Gillian Francis –

Okay, I will wind up now, Mr Speaker.

The Hon. Mike Olsson –

We've got two members not here for the winding up.

The Hon. Gillian Francis –

We should have a break then.

The Hon. Mike Olsson –

I was speaking about those members who are not here, sorry.

The Hon. Gillian Francis –

Could we have a five-minute break to take account of what the Honourable Member said?

The Speaker –

Okay. Let's adjourn for ten minutes, please.

Council adjourned.

Council resumed.

The Speaker –

Please be seated. Alright, when we adjourned that time we were coming towards the end of the debate and the Honourable Mover would like to wind up, please?

The Hon. Gillian Francis –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. First I'd like to thank Honourable Members for all the interesting points that they made during the Adjournment Debate. The Honourable Mike Olsson started off by addressing the need for a Sustainable Water Strategy and the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex pointed out that some work has already been done, but as a Government we will undertake to follow up with the relevant Council Committee so that we will, at the end of the day, have a Sustainable Water Strategy that we can work to.

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex made reference to SHG having to take over airport assets and that will require maintenance and repair of those assets, the roads being one of them. That is correct, we will have to take them over, but as the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex mentioned, we must as a government ensure that people in the lower income bracket aren't disadvantaged or adversely affected by the consequences of us having to maintain those assets, so we will need to flag all of this for discussion with the Financial Aid Mission when they arrive in November this year and as a government we do need to work together to ensure that these discussions are undertaken to the advantage of the people of St Helena.

The Honourable Derek Thomas mentioned the MOU and the discussion that has been taking place very recently with Honourable Members. It is correct to say that the MOU has served its purpose and we will inform officers that we do need to take account of present day situation when we talk about the MOU and if there is a need to revisit and revise policies then we will have to do so.

The Honourable Lawson Henry made mention of the need for a mammogram machine in the Hospital. I am aware of the need and I'm aware of ongoing discussions to procure a machine. We will certainly follow up with the Directorate to ensure that procurement does happen very quickly.

Our newly-elected member, the Honourable Cruyff Buckley, mentioned the low turnout at our recent election, and I'd like to take the opportunity here just to remind our listening public that to help remedy the situation we do need to get people first of all to get themselves registered and, you know, on our Register of Electors.

The Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean mentioned the MOU as well and she talked very briefly about the ten-year development plan, she said it was just a wish list. I have to disagree with the Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean, the ten-year Development Plan has been developed after extensive consultation, it is colour coded and quite easy to understand, it sets out the activities that we plan to achieve and deliver over the next two years, five-year and ten-year period, it has been developed, as I said, in consultation with the people of St Helena. The Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean also said we will probably need to assess the impact that the MOU has had on our people. I would like to say that we will discuss what options are available to us with Honourable Members so that we do have a fair understanding of how people have been impacted, bearing in mind, of course, the resource constraints that we have to work within. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, thank you, Honourable Member. The Motion is that this Council adjourns sine die.

Question on Motion, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

Honourable Members, that brings us to the end of our discussions today. I want to thank both Members John and Cyril Gunnell for taking an interest in the post of Speaker and congratulate you John, Cruyff, on your first mission here today, you will learn as you go along, get some experience, don't be afraid to speak up to us and take part in the debate. Others, lessons to be learned and there it is. Thank you very much indeed. Council is adjourned.

Council adjourned.

