

ST. HELENA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE SPEAKER

The Honourable Eric William Benjamin

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

The Honourable John Gilbert Cranfield

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

The Honourable Chief Secretary	-	Mr Roy Burke
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 Cyril Robert George
The Honourable Lawson Arthur Henry
The Honourable Brian William Isaac
The Honourable Christine Lilian Scipio O'Dean
The Honourable Bernice Alicia Olsson
The Honourable Dr Corinda Sebastiana Stuart Essex
The Honourable Derek Franklin Thomas
The Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce

CLERK OF COUNCILS

Mrs Carol George

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Friday, 12th May, 2017

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, ladies and gentlemen, good morning and welcome to this first sitting of the twentieth meeting of Legislative Council.

First, may I thank you all who have contributed towards the arrangements for this meeting today, the Bishop for leading prayer, the officers and staff in preparation for their support and the media, SAMS, for relaying the proceeding of this House and last, but not least, the Honourable Financial Secretary and his team for the massive amount of work performed to ensure that a budget is presented to this Council before its term of office ends. Thank you everyone.

This meeting is significant in two way: first, it is what we refer to as the Budget Session, when you, Honourable Members, appropriate funding for the coming financial year and in this case today, Honourable Members, you are setting a budget on which a new Council will have to operate; and, secondly, this marks the ending of the term of office for this present Legislative Council as dissolution of this Council is set for 20th May. May I at this time thank you Honourable Members for the valuable service that you have given, particularly with taking sometimes very difficult legislation through this House and there has been a large volume of it during the past four years. Of course this could never have been done without the invaluable support of officers, Committee members, draughtsman and, of course, public support and perhaps we need more often to reflect on just how important it is to bring the public onboard in the work that we do, particularly in this forum as the laws that you pass in this House will have a lasting effect on everyone's lives. So I thank you, Honourable Members, for the valuable service that you have given to this Honourable House and the support that you have given to me as Speaker.

The scene is now set for the new election in July and we as a Council should do all we can to encourage greater participation by members of the public in the elections, be it as a candidate, supporter or voter. I note Council's intent to do so in bringing an amendment Bill to the Election Ordinance for debate.

Our Order Paper shows that in addition to the Appropriation Bill, which is the main purpose of this session, there are three other Bills to be debated, Questions to be put to Council, which might run into a third day. There are twelve Sessional Papers for presentation and one Motion for debate. The normal Adjournment Debate will bring this meeting to a close. I propose, Honourable Members, to suspend the sitting today, as requested by Honourable Members, at about 2.30 to allow your attendance at another function and will resume again on Monday morning at 10 o'clock. And so now on to the business of this House and without further delay I will invite the Clerk to call the next item of business. Thank you, Clerk?

4. PAPERS

SP 1/2017 – The Honourable Brian Isaac.

The Speaker –
Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –
Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 01/2017, the General Amendment (Gender Equality) Ordinance, 2017.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 2/2017 – The Honourable Brian Isaac.

The Hon. Brian Isaac –
Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 02/2017, a Bill for an Ordinance, the Employment Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2017.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 21/2017- The Honourable Attorney General.

The Hon. Angelo Berbotto –
Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 21/2017 – Statutory Report on English Law: 2016.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 22/2017 – The Honourable Chief Secretary.

The Speaker –
Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 22/2017 – Annual Update Report: 2016 – Planning and Building Control Division, Environment and Natural Resources Directorate.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 23/2017 – The Honourable Chief Secretary.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –
Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 23/2017 – Report by Independent Body – Recommendations on Remuneration of Councillors, Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 24/2017 – The Honourable Chief Secretary.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –
Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 24/2017 – Proceedings of the Legislative Council – Tuesday, 14th March, 2017, First Sitting of the Eighteenth Meeting.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 25/2017 – The Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 25/2017 entitled A Bill for an Ordinance – The Appropriation Bill 2017. Mr Speaker, I also have the authority to proceed from the Governor in accordance with section 73(2) of the Constitution.

The Speaker –
May I see the certificate, please?

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 26/2017 – The Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 26/2017 entitled Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, Revenue and Capital Expenditure 2017/18.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 27/2017 – The Honourable Brian Isaac.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –
Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 27/2017 – a Bill for an Ordinance – the Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2017.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 28/2017 – The Honourable Brian Isaac.

The Hon. Brian Isaac –
Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 28/2017 – Report of the Employment Rights Committee, 19th April 2017.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 29/2017 – The Honourable Chief Secretary.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –
Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 29/2017 – St Helena Minimum Wage – Report by the Governor in Council in accordance with section 12 of the Employment Rights Ordinance.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 30/2017 – The Honourable Cyril George.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Cyril George?

The Hon. Cyril George –
Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 30/2017 namely the Public Accounts Committee Report to Legislative Council on the formal Session held on 22nd and 10th April 2017, 10th May and 10th April 2017, and, Mr Speaker, with your permission I will make a short statement?

The Speaker –
Yes, you may.

The Hon. Cyril George –

PAC operates a Select Committee to this House and is tasked with the scrutiny of accounts and audit reports on behalf of Legislative Council. This Sessional Paper Report covers the PAC scrutiny of the audited financial statements of Government and Public bodies for the financial year 2015/16, thereby the reporting of this PAC is entirely up to date before dissolution of Council. This reporting is the accumulation in the cycle of accountability for the resources entrusted to these public bodies when the Sessional Report has been laid and therefore adopted by this House, section 69(9) of the Constitution provides for Government to officially respond to these various recommendations made by the PAC. This will occur in due course when a new Council convenes after the Election. Accordingly, Mr Speaker, I beg to lay Sessional Paper 30/2017.

The Speaker –

Thank you.

Ordered to lie on the table.

The Speaker –

Clerk, next item of business, please?

5.

QUESTIONS

Question No. 1 – The Honourable Gavin Ellick to ask the Honourable Chairperson of the Education Committee.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Will the Honourable Chairperson of Education Committee tell this House what processes are in place to support students studying for their IGCSE exams in school and as well as out of school hours?

The Speaker –

The Honourable Chairperson of Education Committee?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I’d like to thank my Honourable Friend for his question. Mr Speaker, the General Certificate of Secondary Education, which is abbreviated as GCSE, is an academically rigorous internationally recognised qualification awarded in a specified subject generally taken in a number of subjects by pupils in secondary education at the end of Year 11 after preparation over two years. The International General Certificate of Secondary Education, IGCSE, is an international alternative to GCSE which is sometimes preferred by international schools. The examinations are generally considered to be an equivalent standing. Students at Prince Andrew School generally sit GCSE examinations, but Mr Speaker, this response refers to the general topic of Year 11 examinations rather than to any particular qualification or syllabus.

Mr Speaker, Prince Andrew School provides extensive revision support for students as they prepare for their examinations. The preparation provided for students can be considered in terms of general study skills and preparation in particular subject areas. The School also

works with parents to encourage their active involvement in students' preparation for examinations. Mr Speaker, all students are taught the studies skills unit in their personal, social, health and citizenship education, which we refer to as PSHCE. In this unit, students learned about time management, organisation, study strategies and related skills and are given the tools to be able to use these to set up revision timetables and use different techniques to revise. Students also complete a unit of work on stress and anxiety and are taught relaxation techniques to help themselves cope with test anxieties. The School also sets up a rota of booster sessions which runs on a two-weekly cycle and covers all subjects taught at the GCSE. These sessions runs from a quarter past three to four o'clock in the afternoon and consist of forty-five minutes revision sessions which each staff will run with their own programme or revisit topics as suggested by the class.

Mr Speaker, staff also run revision clubs in the holidays for a short period of time. All students and parents are informed of this by letter. Transport is provided. In addition, Mr Speaker, students are given support by past paper practice, focus revision of key topics, peer group tutoring, scrutiny of entry levels, work upon different approaches to revision and relevant studies, so Mr Speaker, I think that I have highlighted to my Honourable Friend what support is given to our students at Prince Andrew School.

Also, reports are sent home to parents three times a year and all parents receive the predicted grade and working at grade for all students in all GCSE subjects so parents themselves can track and engage with the children about how well they are doing. Parents Evenings are held to include a consultation with the children's subject teachers, we speak about revision and any matters pertaining to Year 11 at this time. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Thank you, Madam. I have no further questions at this time, Sir.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Clerk?

Question No. 2 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Honourable Chief Secretary.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Secretary tell this House what is the current situation regarding the investigation commissioned by Her Majesty's Government to ascertain where responsibility lies for the inability to open St Helena Airport to scheduled commercial operations a year ago?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for her question. I would refer the Honourable Member and other Members to the UK Government's response to the 30th PAC Report of Session 2016/17 which was published in March of this year where it is stated that a review is ongoing with a target implementation date of April 2018. In their response, the UK Government have undertaken to share with the Committee conclusions of the review in a way which does not prejudice any potential legal proceedings. I have no further information on the progress of that investigation.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Is St Helena Government requesting updates at appropriate points in time on this matter?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, thank you. St Helena Government has a weekly meeting with colleagues in the Department for International Development and this issue is referred to on a regular basis. The matter is, as I say, still under consideration and still ongoing.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Will St Helena Government consider sharing the feedback that they receive at these weekly meetings with elected members, please?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm afraid I just have shared the feedback from those meetings, there is nothing more to be said.

The Speaker –

Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Could this be done on a regular basis rather than waiting until this matter is brought into the House, Sir?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, an Honourable Member sits on that Tuesday morning meeting and if that information is available I'm sure he will share that with Honourable Members.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Clerk of Council? Alright, just before that, Clerk, it looks like I didn't catch your eye that time, okay, or you didn't catch my eye. Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, a question for the Chief Secretary is, is he aware that the briefings we get from the weekly meeting on Access have not covered the question that was raised in the House today?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Well, Mr Speaker, inevitably I'm not aware because I don't sit in those meetings.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Could I then ask the Chief Secretary if he will now ensure that elected members get regular briefings about this particular issue? Thank you.

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, thank you. The minutes of those meetings are shared with Members, if there are errors or omissions I'm not aware of those errors and omissions so the information that's available to that meeting is shared with elected members every week.

The Speaker –

Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

The point is, Mr Speaker, the Minutes do not contain anything about the substance of the question that my Honourable Friend has brought before the House today?

The Speaker –

Yeah, okay, you're supposed to be asking questions, what is the question?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

So the question is, will the Chief Secretary share with Honourable Members on a regular basis discussions held with DfID in relation to the investigation regarding our airport?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. The information that is gathered at those Tuesday morning meetings is shared, there is nothing more to say.

The Speaker –

I see Honourable Member, Honourable Derek Thomas wants to come in, is it a point of information or are you asking a question?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

A point of information, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

On a point of information, Members will know that I sit on the Access Group, as elected by them, and information that is discussed at those weekly meetings are communicated to all elected members plus they get the Minutes, so whatever is discussed at our weekly meetings are shared with all members, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Right, Clerk? Are you putting another question, Sir?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Could I put a question to my Honourable Friend to the right, am I entitled to?

The Speaker –

I have to put it to the Chief Secretary, the Chief Secretary will then pass it on if necessary.

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Could I ask the Chief Secretary then if any discussions are held at the weekly briefings on airport about the current position regarding the investigation commissioned by Her Majesty's Government to ascertain where responsibility lies for the inability to open St Helena Airport for scheduled commercial flights a year ago? Thank you.

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Any discussions that are held with DfID in this respect are reported, so in this particular instance the information that we have and is discussed is that the Department is continuing to assess the issues as discussed at the Public Accounts Committee and the conclusions of the review would be published in due course. That's all we get from DfID, there's nothing more to report to Honourable Members. If there was anything else we would certainly do that.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Next question, please, Clerk?

Question No. 3 – The Honourable Cyril George to ask the Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Cyril George?

The Hon. Cyril George –

Will the Honourable Financial Secretary tell this Council what are the reasons why the recent visiting cruise ship, MV Astor, was not able to land tourists at Ruperts on Saturday, 8th April?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. Whilst construction is complete and the snagging process is being finalised work is still required to discharge the planning conditions relating to Ruperts Wharf, especially those in relation to rockfall protection. This work is taking place in parallel to the practical planning for certification of the wharf. The Harbourmaster is co-ordinating with the Hydrographics Office to plot the navigational charts following which the certification process will be initiated with Department for Transport. Mr Speaker, whilst we granted dispensation before for the use of Ruperts Jetty it has been entirely at the owner's risk and the call to use Ruperts Jetty would lie with the Captain of the ship and the ship's owner. However, on this occasion in question, there were severe rough sea conditions and swells in excess of two metres which also resulted in overtopping on certain areas of the new jetty. A risk assessment was carried out by the Agencies and it was agreed that the risks of even attempting to use the new jetty in such conditions were too great.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Cyril George?

The Hon. Cyril George –

Can I ask if you're seeing problems with the wharf overtopping during the rough seas, will that continue whilst the, when the wharf are officially open?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, we have no way of actually determining how the sea will actually happen in those areas, but from a practical planning perspective if the sea is particularly rough in Ruperts at that time then a call will be made at that time as to whether the ship should be docking alongside and whether cargo operations will continue to commence.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Cyril George?

The Hon. Cyril George –

Can I also ask, when is it possible to see the completion of the Ruperts Jetty, works on the Ruperts Jetty?

The Speaker –
Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
As I mentioned, Mr Speaker, the actual jetty is complete itself, there are a number of snagging issues that are being taken forward and hopefully those will be covered in the coming months.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Hon. Cyril George –
Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –
Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –
Mr Speaker, could I ask the Honourable Member if the brief for building the breakwater at Ruperts included the safe landing of passengers in rough sea conditions? Thank you.

The Speaker –
Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Mr Speaker, I don't have that information here with me today, but I would assume that, yes, that was included in the original brief for the specification design of the wharf.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Financial Secretary. Honourable Wilson Duncan?

The Hon. Wilson Duncan –
My question to the Honourable Financial Secretary is, are DfID aware of the conditions at Ruperts when the sea is rough?

The Speaker –
Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Mr Speaker, we regularly issue warnings as to severe swell conditions in Ruperts, however, we do not specifically inform DfID when the conditions in Ruperts are severely rough.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Wilson Duncan?

The Hon. Wilson Duncan –
The reason I asked that question is because DfID was said to site that wharf round there and I would like for them to know what the problems are with that wharf.

The Speaker –

Alright, you're making a statement there.

The Hon. Wilson Duncan –

Oh, I'm sorry, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

That's alright, I think it's taken onboard. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Does St Helena Government currently have the necessary financial resources to implement the actions required to discharge the planning conditions?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the Member for her question. In terms of the actual planning condition itself, it says that we need to ensure we have done a rockfall assessment which we think we have sufficient resources to be able to cover.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Financial Secretary. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Is St Helena Government satisfied that it will be safe to operate the wharf at Ruperts until the rockfall protection and other associated measures are put in place?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, this will be taken into consideration when we take the decision to operationalize the wharf. At this point in time I can say that we have done some assessments, we've had expertise come in and make recommendations to us as to what mitigation measures should be put in place to ensure that there's safe workings in Ruperts and obviously that will require some finance to actually implement those suggested changes to Ruperts.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

When is it hoped that the necessary resources will be available to implement the recommended mitigation measures?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, at this point in time I don't have an answer for that. Obviously there's discussions to be had with the UK Government about a capital programme for SHG beyond September 2017 and that will form very much part of those discussions.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Financial Secretary. Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, can I ask the Financial Secretary have any underwater surveys been undertaken in respect of build-up of silt or undermining of the main structure?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, there has been some underwater surveys that are being carried out by some of the local contractors on the island and we are monitoring the build-up of silt in those areas.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, can I ask the Financial Secretary is there a report relating to the works that's ongoing, undertaking?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Sorry, Mr Speaker, can the Honourable Member just.....

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Just to ask, Mr Speaker, if there's anything in writing on the monitoring of the levels built up? Thank you.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, no, we don't have anything in writing in terms of a formalised report, but this is the responsibility of the Harbourmaster and its part of his normal day to day operations.

The Speaker –

Yes, we have to watch that we're not expanding that question, go back to the original question, what are the reasons.

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Will you put your microphone on?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –

Oh, I did. I will start again for the listeners benefit. I rise in support of information to our Honourable Members here and also to the listeners. Members are aware that I’m the Chairperson of the Waterfront Working Group and I note the question refers to about landing tourists at Ruperts, so I would just like to pass on the information, Mr Speaker, that as Chair of the Waterfront Working Group we have included in our, when we went out for tender, an area, we have specified that we need an area at the wharf to land passengers, tourists and passengers in the event if they are unable to be landed at Ruperts, so we have discussed this with the Ruperts Working Group so we are working together on this matter.

The Speaker –

Thanks for that point of information. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Were any changes made to the original design that was fully modelled with regard to the actual construction of the jetty which could have compromised its safety in rough sea conditions?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I don’t have that level of detailed information here, but I can undertake to go away and see whether or not the question that has been raised by the Honourable Member can be answered.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Next question, please?

Question No. 4 – The Honourable Cruyff Buckley to ask the Honourable Chairperson, Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

The Speaker –

Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chairman of the ENRC Committee explain to this House the process one would have to undergo in order to obtain a Spearfishing licence?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Chairman of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, thank you my Honourable Friend for your question. Spearfishing in general is currently not subject to licensing. The exception to this is the requirement under the Firearms Ordinance cap 138 to obtain a certificate for Spear guns that are operated by carbon dioxide canisters whereby the spear is inserted into the barrel of the gun, for the device is then classed as a lethal barrelled weapon. The issuing of licences for spearfishing activities is recommended for implementation in the Fisheries Strategy that has just recently been endorsed. The Strategy recommends that inshore spearfishing be subject to a Fisheries Licensing regime to include catch limits, reporting requirements and the prohibition of the sale of fish to the public. Pelagic spearfishing, spearfishing of larger fish species, such as Tunas, which has just undergone a one-year trial period, is currently being reviewed by the Environment and Natural Resources Department and will be assessed to ensure that any future pelagic fishing activity be consistent with the vision of a sustainable and environmentally friendly fishing sector. As a result of the Fisheries sector strategy being endorsed by the Economic Development Committee recently, the current Fisheries legislation will have to be amended so that a licence for spearfishing generally would mean an applicant having to fill in the necessary application forms for assessment before a licence can be issued. These forms would be available from the Environment and Natural Resources Department Fisheries Office at Scotland. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Okay, next question please, Clerk?

Question No. 5 – The Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce to ask the Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you. Will the Honourable Financial Secretary tell this Council what damage, if any, was sustained at Ruperts Wharf to the infrastructure or plant as a consequence of the recent rough seas?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. In March, two warnings were issued from the Harbourmaster regarding the severe conditions expected at James's Bay and at Ruperts. During this period there were several occasions where overtopping occurred at the wharf in Ruperts. In the design phase of Ruperts wharf, sea conditions were modelled and the storm events were incorporated to ensure that the design was fit for purpose. Call up units have been used to design the wave energy, however, some wave topping is still to be expected. A combined inspection of the wharf was carried out by Halcrow and the Harbourmaster prior to the storm event and inspections were carried out after the event. These inspections were in accordance with the Health and Safety file for the wharf. No damage to the infrastructure or plant as a consequence of the rough seas has been identified. It should be noted that some settlement has occurred, however, this is to be expected, especially after a significant storm event. The rocks, from the gravel to the armour

rocks as well as the concrete armour units are moved by the forces of the waves so that they fit together better and the voids between them are reduced. This settlement is greater than near the round head section of the wharf. This is due to the height of the rock fill being greater and so there is more of it to settle. Also, it was not trafficked as much during the construction which also helps the accelerated consolidation. The cranes and trucks carrying rocks and concrete went backwards and forwards over the first section of the wharf, but obviously this reduced towards the round head. The settlement observed is well within the design parameters and will be monitored on a regular basis alongside the other infrastructure. For information, Mr Speaker, during the mandatory snagging process following the construction completion of the wharf it was noted that sections of the **star** production rock in front of the quay wall had not been placed correctly and needs to be rectified. Basil Read will undertake rectification works under the terms of the Airport DBO contract and are currently making arrangements to ship equipment and personnel to the island to undertake this work.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

The Honourable Financial Secretary mentioned overtopping, I presume this is where the sea comes over the top of the wharf, can you say if during the design process if there was any idea of how many days of the year this overtopping would happen?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, in terms of the specific number of days I can't say, however, when we issued the specification for the new shipping service to take over from the RMS we had identified in that document the amount of time that we think that rough sea conditions would be hampering operations in Ruperts, so I will undertake, Mr Speaker, to submit that information to Members so that they have that for their own records as well.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you very much. I don't know if the Financial Secretary recognise 12%, that's the percentage that's been bandied around, do you recognise this figure and, if so, would you say, roughly translated, my maths obviously is not as good as yours, I'm not the Financial Secretary, but roughly translated would you say that equates to just under one day a week or forty-four days per year?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, the 12% actually sounds about right, but I will need to double check the documentation to ensure and in terms of the numbers, yes, those sound about right.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

I'm reassured, thank you very much, Financial Secretary. Would you say that if this was the case that this is an acceptable level of risk?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, that level of risk is acceptable to SHG, obviously we don't have any control over the weather conditions, but given the past history that we have on the island we know that there are certain periods of the year when the swells are significantly stronger than they are for the majority of the year so that was taken into consideration in the design of the jetty itself, but also when we were putting out for the tender for the new shipping service where, if, for example, it was deemed too difficult for the ship to dock alongside at a specific time during the week it will move out of the port and dock and actually anchor off in the bay until such time that the conditions allow for the ship to return.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Financial Secretary. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you. Given that this may be the case would you say there are any other safety implications for the future use of the wharf?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

I think I would like the Honourable Member to just elaborate what she might think those might be, however, in terms of the risk assessments that are carried out by the Harbourmaster on the use of the wharf I would imagine that several of the possible areas that might arise would be taken into consideration.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Just a point of information, Sir. I had no preconceived ideas about what the safety implications might be, it was just a general question. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Honourable Wilson Duncan?

The Hon. Wilson Duncan –

Mr Speaker, question to the Financial Secretary. This work has been undertaken to remedy whatever they got to remedy round at Ruperts, how will this be funded or who will be paying for this?

The Speaker –
Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Mr Speaker, this will be covered under the current Design. Build and Operate contract with the Airport. If it's been identified there's something that hasn't been correctly in the first place then it will be at the cost of the contractor to rectify those issues.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Is it not still the case that unloading facilities will also remain in James Bay in the case of a prolonged period of bad weather?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Mr Speaker, yes, that is the case in terms of the backup. However, we've all seen the difficulties that the MV Helena has experienced over the last couple of weeks with being anchored in Jamestown and trying to discharge cargo in its current operations, so whilst yes we do agree that that is the backup option we'll obviously need to assess that depending on the conditions at that time.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Thank you. Is it not true that a large amount of heavy chain and other equipment was actually washed overboard from the jetty during the rough sea conditions?

The Speaker –
Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Mr Speaker, without any certainty I can say that I know that some large chain that was earmarked for the BFI moorings had been moved, but I wasn't aware that it was washed into the sea.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Will the Honourable Financial Secretary undertake to check if any damage was done to any equipment there and if there has been any loss of equipment as a result of the rough seas in the area, please, and notify us?

The Speaker –
Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

I certainly will, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Next question, please?

Question No. 6 – The Honourable Christine Scipio O’Dean to ask the Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Christine Scipio O’Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Financial Secretary tell this House, due to the high proportion of non-St Helenian crew on the RMS St Helena, what impact will this have on St Helena Government revenue streams?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. Mr Speaker, it is difficult to say what impact of having a higher proportion of non-St Helenian crew employed on the RMS will have on the SHG revenue sources without knowing the individual circumstances of each person who has worked on the RMS previously. This is due to the fact that even though these St Helenians do not work onboard any longer you would need to know whether these individuals have taken up alternative employment and whether or not those same individuals are still contributing to our tax take through self employment or through general employment on island and this data is not available at this time, so in general, Mr Speaker, I can say, yes, we do expect that having a higher proportion of non-St Helenian crew onboard the RMS St Helena would have a negative impact on revenue streams but quantifying this would be difficult at this time.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Financial Secretary. Honourable Christine Scipio O’Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Financial Secretary advise if all the crew are eligible to pay tax on St Helena whether resident or not?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, our Income Tax Ordinance is quite specific as to who would be paying income tax on St Helena, so if you’re not resident on St Helena you would not be paying income tax on St Helena.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Next question, please?

Question No. 7 – The Honourable Brian Isaac to ask the Honourable Chairman, Economic Development Committee.

The Speaker –
Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –
Mr Speaker, will the Honourable Chairman of the Economic Development Committee tell this House how many poly tunnels have been erected in the ex ADA fields in Longwood and how many are operational and productive?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chairman of Economic Development Committee?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –
Thank you, Mr Speaker and I would like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. Sixteen poly tunnels have been erected in the ex ADA fields involving four agricultural partnership projects with producers, twelve operated under direct soil planting and four to be operated under hydroponics system. Ten poly tunnels are currently operational and productive. A group of four poly tunnels that has recently been established is awaiting an electricity supply to be connected within the next few weeks to operate the hydroponics system, the remaining two has not become operational since their establishment due to the drought period experienced and a period of sickness for the producer involved, but both are expected to become operational shortly. Thank you.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Chair. Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –
Mr Speaker, I thank my Honourable Friend for his response and with that response I think we can look forward, as a point of information, Mr Speaker, we can look forward to seeing a lot more fresh produce in our outlets. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –
Alright, I was just going to tell you you're making a statement, now it's question time, but it's okay. Thank you for that. Next question, please?

Question No. 7 – The Honourable Gavin Ellick to ask the Honourable Chairman, Public Health Committee.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –
Thank you, Sir. Will the Honourable Chairman of the Public Health Committee tell this House what is the procedure for patients who visit the Doctor and then become ill on returning home?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chairman of the Public Health Committee?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –
Thank you, Mr Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question. Patients can call the Hospital for advice or if necessary return to the Hospital.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –
Are the Honourable Chairman aware that people who attend to the Hospital out of hours and return home sometimes become ill and even die?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chairman of Public Health?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –
Mr Speaker, the patients who return home and subsequently die there is a procedure in the Hospital that people can follow and if they have concerns or issue concerning patient treatment then they should be encouraged to comply with the complaints procedures that is set up in the General Hospital.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –
Thank you.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Chairman. Any further questions? Next item, please, next question?

Question No. 8 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Honourable Chairman, Social and Community Development Committee.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Will the Honourable Chairman of the Social and Community Development Committee tell this House under what circumstances individuals who are without regular employment and in need are removed from eligibility for benefits?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chairman, thank you, Ma'am, Honourable Chairman of the Social and Community Development Committee?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –
Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank my Honourable Friend for her question. All persons from the age of sixteen and who are no longer in full-time education to the age of sixty-four

is eligible to apply for unemployment benefits in accordance with the unemployment benefits policy. The circumstances in which individuals might not be eligible for unemployment benefits are – partner's income is greater than £27.50 per week; on imprisonment; on admission to hospital; failing to report to the Claims Officer on a six-weekly basis to be reassessed or if they have not demonstrated that they have been actively seeking work. Persons who are registered unemployed may be eligible for income related benefits if their household income is less than the poverty line in accordance with the Social Security Ordinance. If they are removed from the unemployment register under the circumstances above they could become ineligible for income related benefits. Further, as the income related benefits is calculated on the basis of the members in the household changes in circumstances such as the numbers of members in the household and earnings or assets to these members could result in the household income level exceeding the household poverty line and the benefits will be withdrawn. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

In circumstances of great need, what provision is there to ensure that these people have sufficient food and other adequate provision for their daily requirements?

The Speaker –

Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. As the Benefits Office works under policies, the policies are very rigidly enforced and claimants are assessed on their savings and personal situations, social situations when the application is made. If they do not fall within the benefits system unfortunately the benefits system cannot be adjusted or worked with discretion to help these people, unfortunately, and I know it's a very difficult situation for the Benefits Office, but if they have funding or savings in the Bank or whatever that is taken into account. The benefits system has no other provisions to support these people. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Brian Isaac. To the Chair, please, Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

To start with, I would like to make a point of clarification. I'm not referring to individuals who are not eligible because their household income is adequate, I'm not concerned about the needs of those. If someone is living with a relation or indeed a spouse or partner who is in receipt of a good wage there is no reason for that individual to need to receive benefits. The people that I am concerned about are those who are not in that situation and are still not considered eligible for benefits, so in the case of someone who, for example, has been struck off the list because they haven't been actually actively seeking work during the previous week how is that person going to be able to survive?

The Speaker –

Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I would like to inform the Mover that the provisions within the policy has no cover for these such cases. I am aware of such cases and I would like to tell this Honourable House that at the last sitting of the Executive Council meeting this matter was raised under Any Other Business of the situations of these people who are unable to qualify under the current policy and a meeting is proposed with the Chief Secretary and the Directorate of Safeguarding, the Director of Safeguarding has been made aware of this proposal, unfortunately with the sitting of this House this week and purdah coming in very shortly this matter will need to come to a decision or a meeting hopefully within this coming week. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Is it correct that at this point in time the only recourse these individuals have are to charities like Making Ends Meet?

The Speaker –

Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and it's very fortunate that we have a voluntary organisation out there that are able to help people, known as Making Ends Meet, I work very closely with Making Ends Meet, the ladies there and I very often have to refer clients there because they do not fall within the benefits system, but the Making Ends Meet is the only system outside of Government that are supporting these people and I know that they do a very extreme situation, they go out of their way, they're out on the weekends when benefits has not been approved Friday and they help in many, many various areas that has taken the burden off SHG. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Brian Isaac. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Has any consideration been given to the provision of either food coupons or actually food and essential items to these individuals?

The Speaker –

Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. At my bi-weekly meeting with the Director of Safeguarding on Monday morning this was very much the topic that if a food coupon system could be re-introduced, but finding the funding, which I suspect would probably come out of the benefits budget, would be a problem and having a policy in place as well and unfortunately because of purdah and everything else, the outcomes, if approved or recommended by our meeting that has been proposed, will have to over go to the new government when it comes into place and I'm sure that this question will be recorded on the Hansard and will be circulated as an action for the new Committee to follow through or whatever. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Brian Isaac. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Surely funding should be able to be found immediately to prevent our people being in that level of need and deprivation?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chair?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I do fully agree with my Honourable Mover, but as it is public funding, policies must be set for guidance of members of staff to be able to deliver and I hope that this proposal that has been put forward will be actioned if recommended to do so and I do take into account the situation of these people. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Honourable Chair. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex, to me?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Surely these policies should already be in place, we have all known about this need for a very long time, it's not nothing new?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, from the Social and Community Development Committee this matter has been addressed on a number of occasions, a review has been put forward by the Committee for a consultant to visit the island to review the benefits system, the overall benefits system is a very good system in most respects but there are conditions within the system that has hampered the Benefits Office to provide funding to our most less fortunate people and under these situations it is very difficult to go forward. I again raised this at our Social and Community Development Committee meeting on Wednesday when we had the Economist in attendance and it was agreed at that meeting that the Economist would go away and work with the Finance Department to see if there's any way within our island with our local skills and our official skills to be able to justify or make recommendations to the policy to be able to, I'm not sure what to say here, what the situation is, but to look at the household allowance which are hampering people to receive benefits in their own right and to live a standard of life that is accepted by the island. This work is ongoing and, again, I would like to say that this would be something that the new Council, we hope, will be able to pick up and run, the foundation has been laid by the outgoing Social and Community Development Committee and it's been an ongoing problem. For a consultant to come here, the publication of TORs and everything else it's probably going to be another two years before anything can happen, but if it's something that we can do locally within island, within House, within the realms of the policy to address this situation I wish the new Committee well in doing so. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Brian Isaac, Honourable Chair. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

May I ask, please, that this issue is not stalled for two months until a new Council is elected, people are out there suffering now, can you please undertake to get this addressed? If we are going into purdah then may I ask that the relevant officials move this forward, Executive Council will still be sitting. Thank you.

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I would like to support my Honourable Member that this process has started, the Chief Secretary is aware, the Safeguarding Directorate is aware, this House is aware, the public is now aware and hopefully within the next couple of days before the 20th this meeting can be set to take forward. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

With the greatest respect, I rise on a point of information. The response that my Honourable Friend has given me was not the undertaking that I was seeking, that this matter will not be stalled.

The Speaker –

Alright, that's a point of information. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I also rise on a point of information. My Honourable Friend informed us that the Making Ends Meet was the only charitable organisation that was supporting people like this, I declare an interest here, I'm a member of the St James Parochial Church Council and we also, and I'm sure there are probably other churches like the Salvation Army, that also support people in these circumstances. Thank you, Sir.

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker?

The Speaker –

Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, may I respond to that and I thank my Honourable Friend, it probably was a slip of the tongue, the question was referred to Making Ends Meet, which I responded to, and I do respect there are lots of other voluntary organisations out there who are making such a wonderful contribution to the less fortunate of this island and I openly make an apology to those organisations that I did not include or might have misinterpreted in my response. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Okay, thank you, Honourable Member. Next question, please?

Question No. 10 – The Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean to ask the Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Speaker –

Honourable Christine Scipio O’Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can the Honourable Financial Secretary tell this House if the £2.1m investment by St Helena Government in the hotel at 1 2 3 Main Street is intended to be fully recovered and the Consolidated Fund replenished accordingly?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Christine Scipio O’Dean. The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I’d like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. Before I respond I would like to declare my interest as I’m a member of the Board of Directors of the Hotel Company.

The Speaker –

Noted.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, the short answer to the question is, yes, it is intended to do so. This is one of the principles outlined in the draft exit strategy for SHG’s exit from the St Helena Hotel Development Limited which is going to be considered by Executive Council next week.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Financial Secretary. Honourable Christine Scipio O’Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. In designing the exit strategy, Mr Speaker, will the Honourable Financial Secretary advise if there is no intention to write down the value of the Hotel Company prior to transfer of St Helena Government’s shareholding to external investors?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, at this point in time I would say we’re some way off actually finalising that draft strategy. As I mentioned before there is one that’s gonna go to Executive Council next week where the talks about the principles for the basis of which SHG exits the Hotel Development Limited and these issues will be taken into consideration when that draft exit strategy is actually finalised.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. We’re drafting the exit strategy; will the Financial Secretary advise if the £1m loan guarantee made by St Helena Government will also be cancelled when the transfer of ownership is made?

The Speaker –
Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Mr Speaker, as I said before, these are some of the conditions that will need to be considered and these are those that have been outlined in the strategy which will be discussed next week.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Financial Secretary. Honourable Christine Scipio O’Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Financial Secretary advise what is the time period of the guarantee of the £1m loan made by St Helena Government?

The Speaker –
Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Mr Speaker, it’s for the duration of the loan.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Financial Secretary. No further questions? Next question, please?

Question No. 11 – The Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce to ask the Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Speaker –
The Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Secretary tell this Council what are the salient points of the Information Technology policy for the St Helena Government?

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –
Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for her question. There is no such document entitled The Information Technology Policy, but I can give you some indication of what the ICT strategy, Information, Communication, Technology strategy indicates. The ICT strategy, much easier to say, is updated periodically to take account of developments and future needs. The strategy itself identifies, protects, processes, linkages, risks, benefits and resources required to develop a workable and appropriate system to support the use and management of information and processes within SHG. It sets out seven key principles that guide the ICT operations and these are:

- The provision of better, more convenient and value for money services for the citizens of St Helena;

- It is there to improve management of the funds and resources available to St Helena Government;
- It's there to provide vital information;
- It's there to deploy ICT systems that are both affordable and sustainable; and
- It's there to ensure that ICT systems are secure, ensuring ICT systems and processes are flexible as well as ensuring ICT is appropriate and transparent.

These are the guiding principles on which all of the IT work is carried out. Technology, as we know, is ever changing and is out of date almost as soon as you buy it and there is a need for the IT team to stay abreast of developments and the need for resources to effectively carry out IT development work is well recognised.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Thank you too, Chief Secretary. I rise first on a point of information prior to my next question. I have in my hand here a document that clearly states that there's a policy for the use of information technology, St Helena Government.

The Hon. Roy Burke –

I can't see that, I'm afraid.

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Sorry.

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Okay.

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

But I do also have a further question, Sir.

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Can I answer the point of information?

The Speaker –

Yeah, I think it was a point of information. You may answer, respond.

The Hon. Roy Burke –

This document has been replaced by the IT policy document, sorry, IT Security Policy document.

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

A point of information, Sir! On researching this question, I contacted the IT Department and was given this as one of the current documents.

The Speaker –

Point noted, what is your question, next question?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

My next question is, what penalties are there if any employee of St Helena Government does not, as quoted, and I'm quoting from this policy in the use of information technology, because I have been informed by the IT Department that this is still current, and I quote here, "ensure that all departmental documents, data and files are backed up or saved on a daily basis in the required manner to a secure and approved file server or hard drive"? Thank you.

The Speaker –
Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. St Helena Government's Management Code sets out very clearly how staff must be treated. If they don't undertake their duties as specifically outlined in policy documents then the disciplinary processes are clear.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Sir. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –
Can the Chief Secretary say that if in the previous five years how many St Helena Government employees who did not comply with this policy were subject to formal process, including dismissal, under the disciplinary procedures in the provided Code of Management?

The Speaker –
Er....

The Hon. Roy Burke –
Mr Speaker, I'm afraid, inevitably, I don't have that information to hand.

The Speaker –
Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –
Perhaps the Chief Secretary is able to say if there are any such actions pending?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –
Mr Speaker, I'm afraid I don't have that information to hand either.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –
Can the Chief Secretary say if this applies to all of SHG staff?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, the IT Security Policy applies to all SHG staff. It's there to protect SHG computer systems, networks and data and also to protect staff as well.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Can I ask if this is extended to the TC staff as well, please?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. TC staff are SHG employees and therefore, yes, it does.

The Speaker –

Yes, it does. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Mr Speaker, I'm aware that the HR staff is here, is it possible that we could have this information from there or not?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, I'll undertake to provide the information that the Honourable Member requests for all Members benefit.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary.

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you.

The Speaker –

Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, will the Honourable Chief Secretary tell this House if he is aware of a recent occurrence whereby we were not able to access draft legislation because the officer involved was not on island and it was reported that the information was at his residence in St Helena and if whether or not that is a breach of the policy? Thank you.

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, thank you, I'm aware of the circumstances which the Honourable Member mentions, I will undertake to investigate with my colleagues whether or not that is a breach of the policy.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you. The Chief Secretary says he will make the information available to all Members, but given that the public are also aware of this now as this is being broadcast, can he undertake that this information will be made available to the public as well, please?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, depending on the nature of the information, of course, if that's confidential, because it relates to the employment of individuals, if that's the case I will not be making that public, I'm happy to make the information available to Members though.

The Speaker –

Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

I have asked for numbers, rather than individual or identifying workers, Sir, so I wonder if the Chief Secretary would consider that on a numbers basis? Thank you.

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Well, I'm happy to do so, I did preface my comments by saying if that refers to individuals I wouldn't be making it public.

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you, Sir.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, may I rise on a point of information in support of a point of information raised from my Honourable Friend. I can inform this House, as this has been very much debated in this House previously, that the lack of security of the information, recordings and data sticks has delayed the process of a very important piece of legislation that has been brought and raised in this House and was undertake to be presented to this House this very day, hopefully, if the work had been able to continue in the absence of the particular piece of legal information. The delay has hampered a very important piece of work....

The Speaker –

Alright, thank you.

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

I enforce, I would ask Mr Chief Secretary that he enforce that the proceedings that he said are in place will be strictly adhered to. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Alright, a point of information stops at the information point and can't be prolonged, so thank you for the point of information.

The Hon. Brian Isaac –
Noted, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –
Alright, any other questions, please? Next question, Clerk?

Question No. 12 – The Honourable Brian Isaac to ask the Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Speaker –
Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Financial Secretary tell this House when will the new Bulk Fuel Farm at Ruperts be operational and what will be the benefits to the island?
Thank you.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Mr Speaker, I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. Commissioning of the new Bulk Fuel Installation and formal handover to the Fuel Management Contractor, Penspen, is currently scheduled for completion by June 2018. There will be a period where the new BFI is operated alongside the existing BFI in order to run down the stocks of fuel in the existing BFI up to the point where the existing BFI can be decommissioned. The primary benefit of the new BFI will be a facility that is compliant with Joint Inspection Group Standards, know as JIG standards. These are international standards that apply in particular to the storage and distribution of aviation fuel but apply equally to the ground fuel stored at the BFI. Operating the facility to JIG standards means that there will be improved quality assurance measures in place to ensure that there is minimal risk of the fuel quality deteriorating. This is vital when dealing with aviation fuel. There will also be improved Health and Safety and Environmental Management systems in place at the new BFI. The existing BFI was commissioned in 1987 and is near the end of its working life. Whilst the new fuel industry has evolved over the past thirty years the existing BFI has not kept up. In comparison, the new BFI will be a modern facility compliant with the relevant industry standards. There is sufficient storage capacity at the new BFI to meet forecast demand for six months. The significant increased capacity of the new BFI offers security to supply for both ground fuels and the aviation fuel. Work is currently underway to explore procurement options for aviation and ground fuels once the new BFI becomes operational. It is therefore too early to comment on the impacts of the fuel prices.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Financial Secretary. Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Financial Secretary and it's unpredictable that no-one can predict what is going to be the price of crude oil in the future, but with the expansion and new storage facilities, in the Financial Secretary's vision, do he see that the fuel that is consumed on island could be cheaper than it is currently now at a very high world price?

The Speaker –

You're asking a hypothetical question.

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

It's very hypothetical, but I just thought I would raise it, but I leave it to my Honourable Friend to respond. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Okay.....

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I would prefer a direct question that is not hypothetical.

The Speaker –

What is the question?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, the question is, will the Bulk Fuel Farm, the storage facility, bring lower prices to fuel to the local consumers? Thank you.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. We would hope so, Mr Speaker. The increased capacity of the BFI would be able to give us the comfort that we would need less deliveries, however, as I mentioned in my exposition, we're exploring the different options at the moment for procurement of the fuel which might find that we need smaller, more frequent shipments as opposed to the longer term larger shipments.

The Speaker –

Thank you.

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

I thank my Honourable Friend for his reply.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Is it not also true that the very high overheads will need to be factored into any future costs?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, that is correct, yes.

The Speaker –

Any further questions? Next question, please?

Question No. 13 – The Honourable Gavin Ellick to ask the Honourable Chief Secretary.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Will the Honourable Chief Secretary tell this House what is the recruitment process and terms of reference for doctors?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question. All international recruitment, including medical officers, goes to open recruitment processes. The terms of reference, which are sent to an advertising agency in the UK, enable that advertising agency to draft the advertisement and recommend where to advertise. The process is led by the Director for Health in terms of the terms of reference and the recruitment process generally. British Medical Journal is always used for doctors, but other publications and online advertisers are also used where it's deemed appropriate to do so and if this means of advertising does not bring forth any candidates, and sadly on a number of occasions we have struggled in this respect, then medical recruitment agencies in the UK are approached. We know that they're expensive and charge a finder's fee and if that also fails then we try to use more informal channels, for example, using current and ex doctors just to approach to see if they can prepare to come back or will make a recommendation. Those applications are all assessed by the Senior Medical Officer and the Director for Health who also sit on the interviewing panel along with St Helena Government's UK Representative and a representative of HR, usually the Head of HR. Interviews, which are conducted via Skype and where possible the applicant is required to attend in person the SHG UK Rep's Office for that interview. Applicants who are interviewed also undergo psychometric testing which helps to ensure suitability for the role, and, perhaps more importantly, suitability for St Helena. Doctors are subject to an enhanced criminal records check before they take up appointment and they have to provide evidence of professional registration, evidence of professional indemnity cover, evidence of medical insurance, they need to demonstrate the professional qualifications they have, then they need medical dental clearance and provide two references which are taken up. Terms of reference inevitably vary, depending on what type of medical officer is required. All medical officers are required to participate in general practice and interview questions will be based on this as well as their specialist areas if they're not currently general practitioners. Terms of reference set out the background to the island, St Helena Government's vision and mission, the services offered by Directorates etc etc. The process for recruitment, in my view, is very rigid and tests the suitability of the doctors to the extreme. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Chief Secretary.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –
Thank you, Sir.

The Speaker –
Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick–
Can you say if the medical team on the island are up to speed and are adequate for our needs?

The Speaker –
You're asking for an expression of opinion here.

The Hon. Roy Burke –
Thank you, Mr Speaker, I was just about to say that I'm no medical expert, that's a matter.....

The Speaker –
The Chief Secretary can't give you that answer.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –
Sorry bout that, thank you, Sir.

The Speaker –
Any other questions? Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Chief Secretary made mention that part of the recruitment process that there was checking for indemnity cover, can he say if this indemnity cover extends for the duration of the stay on St Helena, please?

The Speaker –
Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yes, the indemnity cover must extend for the stay in St Helena.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –
Could the Chief Secretary also say that as part of this recruitment is there a test for language skills?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yes, part of the recruitment process tests language skills.

The Speaker –
Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

And without wanting to appear agist, can the Chief Secretary say is there a cut-off point above which we wouldn't employ somebody, a certain age, I mean, beyond retirement or so?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, it would not be appropriate to set age limits, it would be discriminatory.

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you.

The Speaker –

Any further questions? No? Next question, please?

Question No. 14 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Honourable Chief Secretary.

The Speaker –

Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Secretary tell this House what progress has been made regarding the research pertaining to the wind conditions at St Helena Airport and when it is expected that this will be finalised and mitigation measures identified?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, thank you the Honourable Member for the question. There are, in fact, two strands of work being carried out in relation to weather conditions generally at St Helena Airport. The first relates to the conditions experienced on Runway 02, that's the approach from the South and there is work also to assess conditions on Runway 20, which is the approach from the North. Operators are advised of the work that's going on in terms of Runway 02 particularly at the moment where tailwinds of 15 knots have been recorded, so Runway 02 the approach from the South, which is often referred to as the Tailwind Runway. The preparation of those tailwind assessments for 02 is continuous process, the tailwind assessments form part of a pack of information which is provided to all potential operators to St Helena Airport. Similarly, data is collected from every flight that arrives here and the resulting flight reports are also built into the information pack provided to potential operators. These are very practical applications from the data which are used to assist in flight planning. This, I think, gives strong confidence levels that operations can continue to St Helena Airport. So the second stream of work relates to Runway 20, the Northern approach. SHG and DfID have commissioned a computer modelling study and a physical modelling study to model the wind conditions to determine the causes of wind shear and to assess potential mitigation measures. Alongside this, a piece of equipment called LIDAR, which stands for

Light Detection and Ranging, was installed at St Helena Airport for a three-month period. The LIDAR generates fine level of detail on wind patterns and this information can then be used to inform weather forecasts. So all three studies are nearing completion, a comparison exercise is to be carried out to verify the data and produce a single set of recommendations. It's anticipated that this will be completed within the next three months.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Chief Secretary. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

When will the mitigation measures be identified, Chief Secretary?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. So the comparison data which is currently being collated and will be verified into a single set of recommendations, all that's within the next three months. We think, we're reasonably clear already about some of the equipment which could be used, we have additional anemometers on the airport which are measuring wind speed and direction and the LIDAR business case has already been made.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

When the studies have been finalised, what action is planned to be taken to notify the general public?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Once we were clear about the way forward, there will be a statement made to the public as to what those measures are and how we anticipate those measures mitigating the problems that we've experienced at the airport over the last twelve months.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Any further questions? Next question, please?

Question No. 15 – The Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean to ask the Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Speaker –

Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. With the proposed cargo handling moving to Ruperts, it was anticipated that improvements to both Field Road and Ruperts Road is necessary. Sorry, Mr Speaker, I've got some ringing in my ears, give me a moment. Sorry, Mr Speaker, may I start again? Thank you.

With the proposed cargo handling moving to Ruperts, it was anticipated that improvements to both Field Road and Ruperts Road is necessary, can the Honourable Financial Secretary tell this House when will this improvement be carried out and when will Ruperts facilities become operational?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. Mr Speaker, Field Road and Sidepath Road is in need of a significant upgrade and this is an integral part, component, sorry, of moving cargo operations and warehousing into Ruperts. Previous approval was given for SHG to proceed with this Roads Project, known as the R2 Project. However, with Ruperts being of such strategic importance to the island with both the Power Station and the Bulk Fuel Installation being sited at Ruperts, along with the residents and the other industries, the practicalities of closing this road for a significant upgrade without securing alternative access creates a number of difficulties for users and residents accessing Ruperts. It was envisaged that the closure would be more acceptable once the Haul Road was handed over to SHG and adopted as an alternative access option. To date, SHG is still to take over and adopt the relevant parts of the Haul Road and hence works have yet to commence. In addition to the practical arrangements for alternative access, the upgrading of the road will utilise a significant amount of the resources that would have to be financed through the SHG capital programme. Whilst detailed design works have been completed and a planning application is expected to be submitted soon, there is uncertainty on the amount of funding that would be made available to St Helena through the Capital Programme and whilst a six-month extension to the existing Business Case has been granted, with an amount of £1.4 as the budget ceiling, this would not be sufficient funds to complete this project and therefore this would need to form part of a new business case for the Capital Programme beyond September 2017. Mr Speaker, similarly, whilst we are progressing plans for the operationalisation of Ruperts as the main port of cargo operations, any funding for the physical works will need to form part of the new business case to the UK Government. It is, however, anticipated that once funding becomes available the port facilities could be constructed within eighteen to twenty-four months.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Financial Secretary. Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, the Honourable Financial Secretary mentioned the R2 Project, can I ask the Honourable Financial Secretary how much money is still available towards the R2 Project and how much will the R2 Project Road actually cost that he mentioned?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, as I mentioned before, there is no more funding available at this point in time to deliver this project, it will have to form part of the new business case that we will look to try to progress during this year. In terms of the anticipated cost, from the detailed design works that are being completed by the consultants, we estimate it will be somewhere between £2.5m and £3m.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Honourable Financial Secretary mentioned the Haul Road being handed over and adopted, is there a timeline, I know that there are some works ongoing, Mr Speaker, but is there a cut-off date, because I’m certain that the listeners, the members of the public would like to know this, so if he can give us some sort of guideline it would be very helpful for our listeners? Thank you.

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

I know it would be very helpful information, Mr Speaker, but unfortunately I don’t have it here with me today and I don’t see the relevant officer who might be able to advise of that, but I will undertake to get that information and circulate it to Members.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –

As I mentioned, Mr Speaker, that it is for the benefit of the listeners, maybe that I can ask the Honourable Financial Secretary if he could make that information available to members of the public, please?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Sure, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

What other alternative access for, particularly residents in Ruperts, has been considered during the period that Field Road is closed?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, we haven't been able to get into that level of detailed planning at the moment, but from our past experiences, and there has been the proposal to use a ferry service from the Ruperts Wharf around to Jamestown Wharf as an alternative option.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Financial Secretary. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Is another suggestion that was, in fact, made by a resident in Ruperts for a albeit rough connecting track from the upper valley to Field Road also being taken into consideration?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yes, a suggestion was put forward by one of the residents in Ruperts, however, it's going to be a very costly option to actually implement and therefore we have looked at other alternative options as opposed to proceeding with that proposal that was received from the resident.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Financial Secretary. Any further questions? Next question, please?

Question No. 16 – The Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce to ask the Honourable Chief Secretary,

The Speaker –

Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Secretary tell this Council what safeguards are in existence to protect the island against the potential hazards of low-level flying of aircraft?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for her question. All flights to or over St Helena are on a strict, prior permission basis. This applies equally to international flights and local flights, i. e. a helicopter flight or somebody flying a drone or some other such craft. All potential operators are provided with a pack of information, which includes a document called “The Aeronautical Information Publication”, AIP, and that sets out the conditions for flights. It's a standard practice for all airports to produce an AIP. The AIP sets out the permitted heights at which aircraft can operate, this is updated to reflect the requirement on a regular basis, however, a NOTAM, which stands for Notice to All Airmen, has been published and will be brought to the attention of all operators intending to fly to St Helena, so at St Helena these are – for scenic flights around the island, pilot shall fly at 1,000 ft above sea level and more than 600 metres seaward of the coastline; no aircraft is permitted

to overfly St Helena airline below 4,000 ft above mean sea level. Exemptions, however, can be granted by the Aerodrome Manager on a case by case basis and if required, but note that no aircraft is permitted to overfly St Helena Island below 4,000 ft above mean sea level. This means that there will not be any low flying aircraft over the island. However, there has been a recent exception to this rule, which Members and the public will be aware of. A recent charter flight tested the emergency procedures at the St Helena Airport and as a result overflew Jamestown. It can be confirmed that at no time were safety parameters breached during this flight. Having completed the trial and collected the data from this there will not be any need to repeat this exercise. This route will be only used as a last measure as the aircraft will have no other alternative and has declared the emergency MAYDAY. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you. Can the Honourable Chief Secretary say when these safeguards came into force on the island, please?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I don't have that information in front of me. I will get it and circulate it to Members.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you. Honourable Chief Secretary made mention of a permitted height and he also made mention of the low flying aircraft that came on a scenic flight over the island, can he say, is he aware of any hazards that there are from low level flights over the island, given especially that there are mitigation measures at the airport for the likes of bird strike and wind shear?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm not aware of those hazards that are on the island, I think they will be self evident to most people for a low flying aircraft, however, as I've already said, the regulations in place say that no pilot shall fly below 4,000 ft, that's the safety limit as expressed in the NOTAM and is controlled by the Aerodrome Manager.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

And is it the Aerodrome Manager that can give us assurance that these are enforced?

The Speaker –
Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yes, that's the Aerodrome Manager's job.

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –
Thank you, Sir.

The Speaker –
Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –
Thank you. And what happens in the event of a breach of these rules, are there enforceable penalties and by whom?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –
So, yes, there are enforceable penalties. Reports of any infringements, of the nature that I think is envisaged here, are reported to the Head of Operations at the Airport who would investigate the issue personally, but also will call on the support of Air Safety and Support International if required. Thank you.

The Speaker –
Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Why was no advance notification of the safety exercise carried out by the Execujet given to the public?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –
Mr Speaker, I'm afraid I can't answer that question either. I can find out and notify Members.

The Speaker –
Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Is the Chief Secretary aware that some people were quite alarmed by the low flying aircraft, particularly elderly people resident in Jamestown who saw the plane coming at an extremely low altitude and some were actually anticipating that it was going to crash?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yes, I'm aware, I was quite surprised myself.

The Speaker –

Thank you, thank you very much indeed. Next question, please?

Question No. 17 – The Honourable Brian Isaac to ask the Honourable Chief Secretary.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Secretary tell this House what is the composition of staff in the Attorney General's Chambers in the Castle and their roles of responsibility? Thank you.

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question. The Attorney General's Chambers, and the Attorney General is, of course, here today, has a complement of nine full-time equivalent, permanent staff members. In addition to the Attorney General himself, who is the principal Legal Adviser to the Governor and to the Government of St Helena and principal Legal Adviser to the Governments of both Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, there are currently four legally qualified staff in Chambers: The Solicitor-General of Ascension who advises the Government of Ascension on all legal matters and supports the Attorney General as requested, the Crown Prosecutor who advises the Police on charges and prosecutes offences in the Courts of St Helena, the Legal Officer who supports the AG's Chambers with research, drafting and has her own case files relating to land and housing and the Legislative Draughtsperson, who works remotely, whose job is to draft the provisions of the Bills and Regulations. The team is supported by a full-time Personal Assistant and an Administrative Assistant. The following posts are currently vacant – Crown Counsel (Community Care) expected to arrive at the end of May, this position is to advise and represent the Safeguarding and Education Directorates in safeguarding matters under the Welfare of Children Ordinance, the Mental Health and Mental Capacity Ordinance, the Education Ordinance and related matters. Crown Counsel (Civil), this post is currently vacant too, assistance is provided remotely at the moment, a Lawyer has been recruited to this post and is due to start in October of this year. There's also two trainee Solicitors, recruitment was successfully completed and these two trainees are expected to arrive on St Helena in July/August of this year. Additional information in this respect can be found in the Review of Legal Services of St Helena that Professor Roger Smith has recently concluded in April 2017, this will be circulated to Councillors by e-mail and they are invited to address any questions in that respect, in respect of the Report, to the Attorney General. Thank you, Sir.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Chief Secretary. Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the Chief Secretary. Will the Chief Secretary say that the two training officers that will be arriving to the island is adequate for the needs of this island, and I do respect, Mr Speaker, that exchange students is very much welcomed here, but I'm asking for the expertise of these two training officers and the needs of the island's current situation of lack of support? Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, can I defer that question to the Honourable Attorney General who recruited the two trainee Solicitors?

The Speaker –

Yes, thank you. Honourable Attorney General?

The Hon. Angelo Berbotto –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. The trainee solicitors are not trainee officers, they are trainee solicitors, are two individuals who, one of them is a St Helenian, returning St Helenian, who have completed their training, academic training, and in order to be admitted to the role of solicitors in England and Wales they need to undertake a period of two years, so basically their training, their academic training has been finalised. The way that we envisage to use them in Chambers is there is a requirement as a training provider that we expose them to different areas of law. By doing so they will be acquiring experience and also supporting the different Crown Counsels and the Attorney General in diverse issues from prosecuting in the courts for any offences to assisting in drafting legislation, so in terms of their input into Chambers, it is expected to be really very valuable. It is also expected they will assist in filling the gap in respect to the volume of work that we experience in Chambers. I don't know if that is a full answer to the question, I'm happy to answer any other questions. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Attorney General. Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, it is great news to know that we have a returning St Helenian who's going to fill that training post within the Attorney General's Chambers and I think that some more publicity need to be made for our own younger people who needs to see this as a prospective for the island. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, may I ask the Chief Secretary that given the severe difficulties that we encountered recently with capacity in the Attorney General's Chambers if he can assure this House that with the setup that we've just been told about will it overcome those difficulties?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Nobody can predict workload, but the setup that we've just described there, led by the Attorney General and reviewed by Professor Roger Smith, has concluded that that setup should in all normal circumstances be adequate to meet the needs of the Government.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Chief Secretary who will take on the role in St Helena when the Attorney General is absent?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. That's, I'm afraid, a question I can't answer. The Governor manages the Attorney General, not me, that decision is made by her.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, is the Chief Secretary aware that it was this very aspect that has caused all the difficulties in the AG's Chambers because there is all specialist staff in the AG's Chambers, no generalist and that was why the work and many of the legislation that needed to come before the House today was not acted upon because of this very reason?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, thank you, yes, I am aware and the Governor is fully briefed on this issue as well.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Will the Chief Secretary undertake to find out from the Governor and inform this House what action she is going to take about this matter, Mr Speaker?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

I'm happy to ask the Governor that question, Sir, yes, thank you.

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Attorney General would like to respond?

The Hon. Angelo Berbotto –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm starting to feel like the elephant in the room. The Chambers is one, although there are some staff that are in different locations and when the Governor appoints an Acting Attorney General of course the Governor consults with the substantive Attorney General. It was my decision that Mr Scott would be the best placed person to be Acting Attorney General in my absence considering that there were two sessions of the Legislative Council during my absence. Hopefully, firstly, the report of Professor Smith is now available, I hope the Honourable Members will read it and if they have any questions they will approach me with those questions; and, secondly, hopefully the lawyers that have been recruited whilst I was away, one of the issues why I could not change my travel plans was because the recruitment interviews were fixed on the 27th and 28th March and hopefully those people who have been extended an offer will accept and will come to St Helena so that the work of the Attorney General's Chambers can continue and can absorb the growth in volume as well. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Attorney General. Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, will the Attorney General accept that appointing an Acting Attorney General that is not resident on St Helena and given our severe limitations on communications that this is not acceptable. He was present at one of the meetings where the communications was not workable and will he take this into account in going forward? Thank you.

The Speaker –

Attorney General like to answer that one or the Chief Secretary? No, Attorney General?

The Hon. Angelo Berbotto –

When the decision has to be made as to who is going to be the Acting Attorney General, one, in this case myself, needs to consider the experience and whether there has been an opportunity for training one of, um, somebody to carry out this role. The role of Attorney General involves knowing a lot about constitutional law. I am very grateful for the assistance I have in Chambers with the local staff, what I mean, with the persons, with the lawyers that are already in post. I had to make a difficult decision with very little resources. I acknowledge the difficulties, I also acknowledge that much has been done and that Mr Scott carried out an exemplary job, unfortunately I cannot do things when I don't have the tools. I will undertake to provide the training opportunities for the lawyers in Chambers to carry out LegCo-related activities, but I cannot continue with the job of Chambers when we have so far than very much with very little. The report of Professor Smith takes into account the staffing of comparative territories like the Falkland Islands and Montserrat, but they have between ten and twelve staff, we have been doing a lot of work being only five here on St Helena, plus Mr Scott on Ascension, so in an ideal world of course things would be different, but unfortunately we are so far from an ideal world, we have to do without and had I been in a position to change plans I would have, but I have taken into consideration the circumstances, what we had, what we could achieve and I could not have, it was imperative that I was in London to recruit these lawyers otherwise the gap with no personnel would have been even

greater. The lawyers in my Chambers are protected by employment law, they are entitled to a break, they are entitled to their annual leave, in the past some of them have made changes to their personal plans to put Chambers first, that is not a situation that is sustainable, so I hope that reading the actual report of Professor Smith will enlighten everybody as to the situation in Chambers and what we have achieved so far and we do, I do take onboard what would be an ideal situation and will strive to provide that. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Attorney General. Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, on a point of information, I am fully aware that staffing do not fall under the portfolio of Councillors, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Walter Scott during the absence of the Attorney General for his valuable support given to Council, and I think I can speak for all of Council. What was the problem, the problem was the communication link between Ascension Island and this Chambers here. During Executive Council meeting it was pause, hold on, and my Honourable Friend here, Councillor Thomas, was the one who walked up and down with the microphone to Members to speak into. That is not the way we should be working today and I do accept the situation that we were faced with, but the support given by Mr Scott and the ladies, Mrs Macmillan and the other lady in the Chamber during the absence was very much valued. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

A point of information I take it. Right, okay. Honourable Pamela Ward Pearce?

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I also rise on a point of information and I'd like to endorse what my Honourable Friend has said, nobody disputes that the calibre of work that we got from Walter Scott on Ascension was exceptionally good and I have no problem with that, it is, as was stated, communications, but it seems that as a Council that we can be made to rely on an internet link for Skype conversations to guide us legally, but the Attorney General, and nobody disputes that he needs to have his annual leave, but he had to be in London to conduct an interview that could arguably have been done by Skype.

The Speaker –

Yeah, okay I have to cut you off.....

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Thank you.

The Speaker –

.....and let you make a point only, otherwise it turns into a debate rather than Question Time. Councillor Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

I too going to rise on a point of information, Mr Speaker, and I acknowledge what my two colleagues has said about the level of work that was provided to this House by the Solicitor General from Ascension. I would also like to make the House aware that up to 2015 we had a Solicitor General here in the Attorney General's Chambers and that post was a generalist post and always acted for the Attorney General. It was a model that work, I don't see

anything in the model that's been explained to us here today to overcome the problems that we've had. The Attorney General himself is talking about training. We should have somebody in post who would be able to step into his shoes, it worked before, why not now? Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Yeah, thank you, thank you, thank you. Okay. Attorney General, you wish to respond on that?

The Hon. Angelo Berbotto –

Yes, I...

The Speaker –

And this is not a debate, it's an answer to questions.

The Hon. Angelo Berbotto –

No, no, absolutely, and some of the comments here are quite disturbing, but others are quite positive and especially the contribution of Councillor Henry, in particular to this issue of the Solicitor General. I invite Councillor to read the report of Professor Smith because it actually deals with that as well. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Thank you. Right, Honourable Members, I think this is quite timely, we've come to the end of Question Time here now, I think we should have a lunch break and when we come back we will have to take the Appropriation Bill, we shall have the Financial Secretary on his maiden voyage with his first Budget Speech, which we all look forward to and see how things go then. Alright, Honourable Members, thank you all very much. Council is suspended until 1 o'clock.

Council Suspended.

Council Resumed.

6.

MOTIONS

Motion No. 1 – The Honourable Financial Secretary.

THE APPROPRIATION BILL, 2017

The Hon. Dax Richards (Financial Secretary) –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the Appropriation Bill, 2017, be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the whole Council. I formally confirm that this Bill is presented on the recommendation of the Governor in accordance with section 73(2) of the Constitution.

The Speaker –

Is there a seconder?

The Hon. Roy Burke (Chief Secretary) –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Yes, good.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, before I give my first budget speech, I'd just like to declare my interest as a Director on the Board of St Helena Hotel Development Limited and also as a Director of Connect St Helena.

The Speaker –

Thank you.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present a Bill for an Ordinance to provide for public services for the financial year 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018.

Mr Speaker, this is my first Budget Speech and it gives me great pleasure today to outline plans for the year ahead. We are at an important crossroad in the Island's history, we have an opportunity to change the outcomes for all on the Island and pave the way for St Helena to be in control of its own destiny. For 81 years St Helenians have been listening to the idea of an airport, it's been a long hard road and for many years this has been the toughest. We are now on the cusp of that vision coming to a reality and everyone in St Helena Government and Enterprise St Helena have been working together to ensure that we protect what is precious, whilst ensuring that the Island grows in a sustainable way for the benefit of all on St Helena. Whilst we all felt the disappointment of the delayed start to scheduled air services in 2016/17, 2017/18 brings a new hope with scheduled air services expected to commence later this year on completion of the current tender process. Mr Speaker, I believe the Island is more equipped now to respond to air access as a result of the delay.

Mr Speaker, this budget today outlines some of the key successes of the Island over the past 12 months and looks ahead to what can be expected in 2017/18 - a period where we hope that all on the Island can start to reap the benefits of commercial air services.

Mr Speaker, it is easy for us all to dwell and focus on what has not gone so well, especially over the past few months with the drought, the breakdown of the RMS St Helena, having a number of our people stranded in Cape Town and the UK which was compounded by the problems experienced with the runway on Ascension. However, Mr Speaker, there have been so many significant achievements over the past 12 months, and these include:

A successful homecoming by air for those stranded off-Island - what a huge success and boost to morale on the Island

The completion and open-ended Certification of the Airport

The arrival of charter air services and medevac flights and the lives that that have saved as a result

The completion of the new jetty in Rupert's and the new sea rescue building

A successful trip of the RMS to the UK

The declaration of our Marine Protected Area

The upgrade of the hospital to include modern diagnostic equipment

The introduction of a bigger and more experienced mental health team

The launch of the Community College

A complete revamp of the Jamestown Market and

Upgrading of 26 Government Landlord homes, to name but a few

It is important to recognise all of the hard work that has gone into this.

Mr Speaker, Executive Council and all members of the Legislative Council have recently endorsed the 10 Year Plan for St Helena which will replace the Sustainable Development Plan and form the foundations of Island planning for the foreseeable future. This plan, although ambitious, outlines the vision for St Helena, and it is the people's vision. We have often suffered from short-term thinking and planning across the Island, we have had people, with different ideas as to how the Island should work, come and go, changes that have been made without understanding how these contribute to the long-term goals for the Island and its people. This 10 Year Plan will serve as a foundation of change, it will however be reviewed regularly to determine whether adjustments are needed to these activities to be able to achieve the long-term vision for the Island.

Mr Speaker, if you were to ask the economically active St Helenians what is their number one goal, most of them will probably say that they want to own their own home. This has been a key driver for a great number of people over the years and that is why St Helena has one of the highest home ownership rates in the world at 72%.

Mr Speaker, last year we saw the introduction of the new Lands & Buildings Disposal Policy which seeks to make more affordable land available; with the value of private land sales on the increase, the availability of affordable Crown land cannot be underestimated. Additionally, one of our tax principles going forward is to stimulate the supply of land, housing and infrastructure, and more work will be done on this over the coming year.

The new policy allows up to 50% discount on Crown land, depending on income levels, in addition Council has recently supported the request to have annual rents for Crown land to be offset against the final sale price - this is good news indeed. A review of the Land Development Control Plan has also commenced and it is hoped that additional land will be made available for house building and economic development.

We still face a number of challenges. Mr Speaker, presently as a family you can only borrow up to three times the salary of the largest earner in the family and half of the salary of the second highest earner, this means that for a family on an average income of £7,500 they would only have access to around £26,000 through a loan from the Bank of St Helena. For those who have built a house or an extension in recent years you will know that £26,000 will not buy you a lot when you take into consideration the cost of land. This often means that people take up offshore employment to supplement this funding to complete the build or to buy a home, we lose so many of the economically active people on the Island because of this issue and we need to make the conditions right to encourage these people to remain on Island and continue contributing to our economy whilst also allowing them to achieve their dream - not through remittances but also through a thriving economy, people should be able to have the opportunity to make sufficient money here on Island which will contribute to an inclusive family life.

Mr Speaker, in setting the budget we follow the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and as part of this process, Directors and Directorates were asked to take into account the agreed guidelines. These include:

Improving efficiency and productivity with regards to divestment opportunities, Systems and Process Reviews and better use of SHG resources

Streamlining and restructuring the Public Service

Improving joined up approach to business delivery between different sectors, and

Increasing local revenues where it is deemed appropriate.

SHG aims to allocate resources to the five goals as set out in the new 10 Year Plan which are: *Altogether Safer, Altogether Healthier, Altogether Wealthier, Altogether Greener and Altogether Better for Children and Young People.*

This year's funding envelope conveyed formally last week by the UK Government is for a one-year programme. Discussions will be held during the year ahead to be able to get to a three-year settlement and provide additional certainty for the Island. The contribution provided to us by the UK taxpayers is crucial in helping us to achieve self-sustainability, and the timely investment sooner will accelerate a reduction in our reliance on the UK Government in the future.

The delay in receiving confirmation of the financial aid settlement has meant that a balanced budget could not be agreed in readiness for the start of this financial year. A Rollover Budget, which is effectively to carry forward the previous year's budget for four months, was approved by Legislative Council on 30th March 2017 to ensure that public services continue to be delivered during the period. This Appropriation Bill ensures that public services and spending can continue past the four-month rollover period for the rest of the financial year.

Mr Speaker, turning now to the economic outlook, two of the biggest impacts on the economic backdrop of this budget is changes in exchange rates and inflation.

St Helena is a net importer, and fluctuations in exchange rates have significant effects on the pricing in St Helena. Since the decision of the UK to leave the EU was taken, the value of the Pound fell 17% against the Dollar, 12% against the Euro and 25% against the Rand, which has caused imported goods and services to be much more expensive.

Inflation based on St Helena's Retail Price Index increased by 4.7% in 2016, the largest annual increase since 2012. The price of food continues to be the major pressure on the overall rate of inflation in St Helena with price increases contributing to 60% of the headline inflation rate. This reflects the increased costs of imported goods because of the weakened Pound and as a result of the drought in South Africa.

The second largest pressure on inflation has been fuel, contributing 15% to the headline 4.7% inflation rate. The cost of electricity on St Helena is high, owing to the price of diesel and that's why we have launched the Energy Strategy which will significantly increase the amount of energy sourced from renewables in order to reduce the cost of energy to households and businesses.

At the end of 2016, the number of people resident, plus visitors, stood at 4,640 with an average over Quarter 4 of 2016 of 4,550 – this is a 2.5 % decrease over the previous 12 months. In general, we tend to see the highest population numbers within Q1 and Q4 months of each year, coinciding with many St Helenians working abroad returning home to visit friends and family. However, Q4 of 2016 has seen the lowest population numbers for that period since 2013.

We need to work on improving our records of national accounts so that we report in a more timely manner on the key national statistics such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Product (GNP) and Gross National Income (GNI). That is why from 1st April 2017 we are digitising the Income Tax forms so that we can access business income information more quickly and produce more timely estimates of GDP.

Although work continues on the recently re-named Haul Road which links Rupert's Bay and the Airport, and the Bulk Fuel Installation, we have already seen a significant reduction in Basil Read expatriate workers on St Helena and a 50% reduction in the total project workforce since April 2016. Owners of rental accommodation, retailers, bars and restaurants have benefited from the spending by project staff, but this benefit shall continue to reduce over the year as the immigrant workforce continues to decrease. However we do see this being mitigated somewhat through Tourism as a result of commercial air services.

Recorded unemployment remains low as those previously employed with Basil Read have been absorbed back into the private sector with some staff transferring directly onto the Hotel Project in Main Street. At the end of April there were 18 registered unemployed compared with 10 people in February 2016 according to the Census. This indicates that the labour market continues to be tight, and unemployment continues to be low.

A weaker Pound can present an opportunity for St Helena's export industries. We benefit from significant natural resources; sashimi grade tuna, some of the world's most expensive and sought after coffee, and an ecosystem which supports a third of all the endemic species for the British territories and these attract tourists. But we can do more to benefit from this wealth. Ensuring a sustainable future for St Helena means sustainably increasing exports and reducing our reliance on imports. This is how we can have greater control over our own destiny.

Turning now, Mr Speaker, to the performance of Directorates in 2016/17, including Enterprise St Helena.

Local revenue collected for 2016/17 is £12.9m with £4.7m coming from Taxes compared to the original budget of £5.1m and £5.4m coming from Customs duties compared to the original budget of £6.0m.

Tax revenues from businesses and corporation tax are down by approximately £600k largely due to the impacts of businesses taking advantage of the Investment Tax Credit. This has however seen over £3.5m invested by businesses on the Island in 2014/15 and 2015/16 and this is surely a good news story for business investment on the Island.

2016/17 has been a challenging year from a budget perspective with the delayed start to scheduled air services the extension of the RMS St Helena schedule was so important to maintaining access to the Island. This extension however has required a significant level of additional resources and has put significant pressure on the finances of SHG. It is estimated that the total cost of shipping for 2016/17 is in the region of £2.2m and this has been funded through under spends in the aero-medical evacuation budget of £0.5m and a withdrawal from the consolidated fund of surpluses from the 2015/16 financial year amounting to around £800k.

Whilst the cost of shipping has broadly been covered, SHG has significantly overspent on overseas medical referrals - we have spent £1.9m on overseas medical referrals in 2016/17 compared to the original budget of £1.0m. As a result of the short fall in revenues and overspends on overseas medical referrals we are projecting a significant deficit for the 2016/17 financial year of £1.6m. This leaves the consolidated fund at the end of March 2017 with a projected balance of £1.5m.

Mr Speaker, turning now to some of the key successes for 2016/17; we'll talk about Enterprise St Helena first. Some of the key projects delivered by Enterprise St Helena include the opening of the Jamestown Market offering 13 business units; A Business Support Initiative in partnership with SHG and the Bank of St Helena, offering technical and financial

assistance to businesses affected by the delayed start to scheduled air services; and the opening of Bertrand's Cottage Ltd as a Hospitality Upskilling Centre; 23 students completing accredited training courses in Hospitality, Construction and the Built Environment.

St Helena Tourism attended a number of International Travel Shows including PURE and the World Travel Market.

In the coming weeks, the Tourism team will roll out best practice for transport and accommodation providers and continue to explore support mechanisms for insurance.

The Hotel in 1,2,3 Main Street continues to progress well with the opening scheduled for September or October of this year.

While concerns have been raised over the hotel competing with other accommodation establishments, once open, having a recognised international brand on the Island will have positive spin offs for the whole economy. Mr Speaker, I can confirm that there will be no SHG subsidy for hotel operations and it will need to stand on its own two feet and service its own debt.

But SHG should not be in the business of hotels, and has only intervened because the market has failed to provide the magnitude and type of accommodation demanded by increased visitor numbers. As was agreed when SHG took the decision to intervene - an exit strategy is being developed to ensure SHG withdraws from this non-core activity and will be discussed with Executive Council next week which will include the options for local ownership.

Turning now to Education; 2016/17 saw seven young people begin their tertiary studies in the UK – this is the largest scholarship number in our history.

The St Helena Community College began operations and to the end of March 426 individuals have registered for 515 courses, including 9 on Degree courses.

An expanded Apprenticeship Scheme saw as many as 52 apprentices in October 2016.

Schools developed individual School Improvement Plans, but shared a focus on improving literacy and numeracy skills.

2017/18 will focus on improving Information Communication Technologies access for Education, especially for primary schools as this supports learning across all domains and helps prepare St Helena's young people to compete globally.

Making sure that all children get the support they need to learn is also a key focus for 2017/18, and the new resident Educational Psychologist offers a long awaited support to the Inclusion team

Turning to Health; 2016/17 saw the completion of the Hospital Redevelopment Project which includes a new CT scanner, a new operating theatre and a mammography unit. Our thanks are extended to the St Helena Cancer Support & Awareness Charity and the League of Friends for their kind donations towards this machine. The new equipment has increased local self-sufficiency and reduced the need to refer certain cases overseas for diagnostics.

The Nursing Staff competencies framework and up-skilling programme is progressing well with six nurses working towards Nursing Degrees.

There have been a number of key appointments which I'm sure all will agree have made a significant difference to members of the community. Of particular mention is the Orthopaedic Surgeon, a second Physiotherapist and a second Radiographer.

2016/17 saw the completion of the procurement exercise for the aero-medical evacuations (Medevacs), and the provision of the specialist secondary/tertiary healthcare services through ER24 and (MSO) who are Medical Services Organisation International respectively who are on the verge of signing a contract.

Other key outcomes include the reopening of most country clinics, the relocation of the Pharmacy to the ground floor allowing easier access for the elderly and disabled, the introduction of a third dental surgery, the expansion of the mental health team, and, Mr Speaker, what is particularly important to highlight is the additional priority that has been given to training and development across the directorate and the uptake of staff across the different disciplines.

Turning now to Environment & Natural Resources; 2016/17 saw the introduction of a Marine Protected Area for St Helena's 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone. A Fisheries Strategy has recently been endorsed by the Economic Development Committee. The strategy serves to underpin the development of an economically and sustainable fishing sector for the Island. Over £100k has been spent on the refurbishment of Government Landlord Houses.

The commencement of the development of the agriculture infrastructure in the Longwood dairy area and work on invasive plant species will continue this year, including the implementation of a national weeds strategy which will be supported by funding from the Darwin Plus programme.

Moving to Safeguarding; In 2016/17 there were 300 referrals to Children's Services. There are 58 people in residential care, including 4 in supported accommodation.

A new scheme of service for social care workers came into effect from 1 April 2017, a new employability scheme is to be rolled out which will focus on getting more disabled people and vulnerable adults into employment.

The introduction of the Better Life Allowance has seen those with the most complex of needs benefit financially.

SHG in partnership with the United Nations has opened a Safe Haven and now has a dedicated team working in the community with survivors of domestic abuse.

Mr Speaker, the 2016 Census demonstrates an aged and ageing population with 21% of our population over the age of 65. This poses some significant challenges for the Island in terms of providing care for elderly people, this will create a huge pressure on the budget for future years and we must do all we can to help keep people in their homes because we know our elderly are more comfortable living in their own environment. We will be investing to help with adaption and aids to allow our elderly to stay and live comfortably in their homes for as long as possible.

Turning to Corporate Services; In 2016/17 we saw the development of an expanded Public Transport Service which has seen a 19% increase in ticket sales over the year; Increased use of Plantation House for tours generating additional revenue of £10k' and greater use of Social Media as a communications channel through the introduction of Twitter and Facebook accounts by the Press Office. We understand that there are over 4000 followers.

NGOs: NGOs play, Non Government Organisations, I should say, play such an important role in our community and SHG is committed to supporting organisations who improve the lives of many on the Island. Through youth activities, community groups and support for vulnerable people, SHG is proud to work with such dedicated organisations.

We must also pay tribute, Mr Speaker, to those who volunteer in our community who enrich so many lives on a daily basis. This budget again sees financial support for a wide range of Non Government Organisations who are part of the fabric of St Helena.

Turning to Corporate Finance; 2016 saw the introduction of ASYCUDA, the new data capturing and processing system for Customs, and whilst there have been some teething

problems at the start, things have settled down now and business users are getting used to the declaration process. More work will be done to streamline the process and make it easier for users to complete their declarations - the recent connectivity upgrade, for example, has made a significant difference to external users who can now remotely access the system on a consistent basis.

Turning now, Mr Speaker, to the backlog of Financial Statements:

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to stand here today and report that St Helena Government have cleared the backlog of Financial Statements and are now on track with the reporting timelines. It has been a challenging couple of years for both the Corporate Finance team and the St Helena Audit Service team to be able to get to the point where we are now up to date. Mr Speaker, I would like to extend my thanks to both teams for the immense amount of work completed, especially over the last Financial Year where three sets of Financial Statements were produced and audited along with numerous other pieces of financial reporting on the various funding programmes. But, Mr Speaker, this is no time to be complacent, we must ensure we continue to produce and audit our financial statements in a timely fashion and above all we must make sure we do not find ourselves in this position again. The Financial Statements are an integral part of the Governance Structure and it is vital that the public service can be held accountable for the spending of public funds in the most efficient, effective and economical way possible. Strengthening Governance and accountability will continue to be a focus of SHG and the Public Accounts Committee throughout 2017/18.

Turning now to the Capital Programme; Last year, SHG's Capital Programme was under special measures as a result of poor performances in the previous years. This resulted in SHG undergoing a Programme Improvement Plan, or better known to everyone as the PIP. This took place between May 2016 and October 2016. SHG undertook a number of reforms to improve governance and accountability to aid the delivery of our key projects. SHG, however, passed the PIP and progressed with the plans to implementing a number of key projects in 2017/18.

In total, the funding received from the UK Government for 2016/17 was just over £4m for capital together with a pre payment from the previous year making the total budget available for the year of £5.1m. Total expenditure for 2016/17 is estimated to be £4.9m with the balance of £200k being carried over to pay for expenditure in 2017/18 which has been delayed largely down to the problems of access to the Island as a result of the cancellation of voyages 255 and 256.

The highlights in terms of expenditure include:

£1.1m on the equipment and designs for the operationalisation of the container handling facilities in Rupert's;

£600k on the hospital refurbishment project;

£400k on the electrical distribution system to connect Blue Hill and Sandy Bay;

£315K on the Hutts Gate reservoir;

Over £500K on sewerage network upgrades in HTH and Rupert's;

Over £500K on water transfer systems and deep bore hole exploration in relation to the drought crisis; and

Just under £300k on the HTH Comprehensive Development Area to put in services;

2017/18 however is not what we had hoped, with the UK Government providing a 6-month extension to the existing business case to the value of £1.4m up until September 2017. This has somewhat limited our projected progress on some of the key projects needed to be

progressed this year to compliment the start of commercial air services. Projects such as Rupert's development, including Side Path and Field Roads, the prison and rock fall protection, these will all have to be developed in slower time.

This highlights the risks to SHG of depending on a small number of major donors and we must do all we can to find alternative sources of funding to progress these projects and reduce our reliance on UK Government funding sources. We must continue to invest in our infrastructure to support the development of the Island and enable the community to achieve the goals as set out in the 10 Year Plan. But this is only half the battle, good maintenance structures are so critical to our development and more work is needed in developing and financing such programmes.

Turning now, Mr Speaker, to the Drought; Mr Speaker, 2016/17 was a challenging year with everyone being asked to restrict their water usage during the drought period. Fortunately the rains came in February and our reservoirs are now full to capacity. Mr Speaker, if the drought had continued we might have found ourselves in a very difficult position. We must therefore build our resilience as these irregular weather patterns are likely to become the norm in the future with the implications of climate change.

Council is keen to ensure that there is greater political oversight on this precious resource, and a subcommittee is being formed to take forward a review of the current framework. Work however continues to find a sustainable and affordable solution for capturing water resources with the deep bore hole drilling by the contractors that have recently left the Island. These have and are being financed through the Capital Programme. We look forward to the outcome of this contract.

Progress on the Prospectus for Change: We must continue public sector reform to ensure the people of St Helena get the public services they deserve, and perhaps more importantly, for the staff in SHG to create the organisation that they want to work in. A selection of the changes in train is:

Introduction of the Employee Representative Committee (ERC);

The introduction of the Partnership Forum - for the representatives of the Employment Representative Committee to discuss with management face-to-face matters that directly affect staff;

The Pay and Grading Review continues, the final Pay and Grading report has been submitted and work on the creation of Job Families has also been completed and will be shared with the Employee Representative Committee.

We continue to identify successors to take on the roles of TC Officers. The spate of recent succession plans achieved is a real testament to our local staff that if you are ambitious, dedicated and committed, the opportunity for a rewarding and fulfilling career with SHG is a reality.

Turning now, Mr Speaker to Improved Communications; Mr Speaker, there are two very important projects that are being pursued by SHG and its partners which could significantly change the landscape for St Helena.

The first is securing a fibre optic cable to improve internet connectivity on the Island and the second is to achieve 100% energy from renewable sources.

Mr Speaker, in 2016/17 on the back of the UK's decision to leave the EU, Executive Council agreed that St Helena should pursue a fibre Cable from the EDF 11 programme instead of a new build hospital. There were a number of drivers for this change however, securing the funding was of paramount importance as this was considered necessary before article 50 was

triggered. In addition, after careful consideration, the benefits of the cable outweigh the benefits of the hospital given that most of the improvements in health was predicated on telemedicine which could not be delivered without the capacity on offer with a cable. There are two other key benefits, the first being in education where curriculum and teaching are heavily reliant on better connectivity and the second being the economic development potential which would open up other opportunities for St Helena.

Mr Speaker, A Digital Strategy has been drafted and endorsed by the Economic Development Committee for public consultation and this is likely to commence over the coming weeks.

Renewable Energy: The second key project for the Island comes on the back of the newly adopted Energy Strategy, where St Helena Government in conjunction with Connect Saint Helena Ltd are looking at options to get to 100% renewable energy. An expression of interest was recently launched to understand what interest there is in helping the Island to reach this ambitious target. We were fortunate to get a significant number of responses. The benefits of meeting this target are hugely significant for the people of the Island, not only will there be environmental benefits, there are expected savings to be had in generation costs which will result in a reduction in the cost of electricity to consumers across the board. This is good news for all given the extremely high cost of energy on the Island. Mr Speaker, it is also pleasing to announce that there is planned increase in the price of electricity for 2017/18.

Turning now to the Outline of the 2017/18 Budget; Mr Speaker, moving now to the budget outlook for 2017/18, I am pleased to announce that we have received a Financial Aid settlement for the coming year of £28.7m. This is a real term increase of £6.2m compared to last year's settlement and we are grateful to the UK Tax payer including our Saint Diaspora, and this increase is largely associated with the £4.2m for maintaining the RMS in service. However, I'm also pleased to announce increases in frontline services such as an additional £250K on Health, and additional £270K for Education and additional £267K for Safeguarding and £100K on social benefits.

This is a good news story for the Island, given the current political climate in the UK. To achieve any real term uplift in expenditure should not be taken lightly, and we thank Elected Members, government officials, directors and the Financial Aid Mission team for all the hard work which went into the negotiations and the provision of the supporting documentation.

Total spending for 2017/18 is expected to be £42.1 million. It is estimated that SHG will allocate this budget to the five key goals outlined in the Ten Year Plan as follows:

- £8.1m will go to ***Altogether Safer***
- £11.4m will go to ***Altogether Healthier***
- £5.8m will go to ***Altogether Wealthier***
- £5.6m will go to ***Altogether Greener***
- £11.2m will go to ***Altogether Better for Children and Young People***

Local revenues for 2017/18 are expected to decrease slightly, which is largely linked to the slow down as a result of the demobilisation of Basil Read (BR). The average wage levels continue to hold and this is largely down to the private sector absorbing Basil Read workers and the labour market remaining tight. Revenues from Customs are expected to be lower than the last year from £6.0m to £5.7m. This is due to the lower expected import of tobacco products which we have seen in the last financial year. Tax Revenues are expected to rise marginally on the previous year's budget increasing from £5.1m to £5.2m. We continue to

provide support to the private sector through the investment tax credit scheme which limits the corporation tax we can expect to collect however, we also expect to have increases in PAYE and Self Employed tax revenues which will enable us to at least maintain the level of tax revenues for this year. When compared to the actual outturn for 2016/17, the Customs tax budget has increased by £0.5m. Other local revenues are expected to be lower than the previous year from £2.7m to £2.6m.

Turning now, Mr Speaker to Tax and Customs Changes; similar to last year, 2017/18 will see no significant changes to our tax policies. There are only minor changes to the Investment Tax Credit which will see the introduction of a £30K cap on the amount of Investment Tax Credit that can be claimed in any financial year. This modest change was a result of consulting with the business community and Elected Members, listening to their concerns and responding accordingly. It is important that as an Island we portray a stable tax environment where we do not change our tax policies regularly, I'm therefore pleased to confirm there are no other changes to tax proposed for the next financial year, Corporation Tax will remain at 25%, the personal allowance will remain at £7000 and the first £18,000 of chargeable income will be taxed at 26% and a higher rate of tax of 31% will remain for chargeable income over £25,000.

The Investment Tax Credit System was introduced in 2013, and whilst this year there has been a significant increase in the uptake of the Investment Tax Credit scheme, what became apparent throughout the consultation process is that not all businesses are aware of the Investment Tax Credit scheme and have not enjoyed the benefits of their investment over the past four years. To those businesses that have not taken advantage I would encourage you all to take up this offer for the 2016/17 financial year. What else was quite evidently clear is that the Island is suffering from a lack of good financial services advice. ESH have been tasked to find a way to address these skills gaps and facilitate the delivery of these essential business services.

Mr Speaker, as in previous years, I'm announcing that as with effect from 30th March there has been an increase in the duty on alcohol and tobacco. For Alcohol there is a 4.7% increase in duty which is in line with inflation over the past 12 months, Tobacco increased by 5.7% which is inflation plus 1%, these increases are the same as that agreed in 2016/17.

This meant that duty on a 330ml bottle of Castle Light beer increased by 3p, a 750ml bottle of Spirits with an alcohol content of more than 22% the duty has increased by 58p. For a pack of 20 cigarettes the duty has increased by 20p.

Mr Speaker, the additional revenues generated from these increases will help to maintain essential public services such as health, education for our children and policing services.

Mr Speaker, we are also pleased to announce that further changes have been agreed to support the Island's push on the green agenda, I can also confirm that from 30th March 2017 a number of goods were reclassified to the 5% category of the Customs tariff. These include the likes of solar panels, photovoltaic panels, wind turbines and rainwater storage tanks. Members of Legislative Council hope that this benefit will be passed on to consumers by the merchants.

This builds on the changes made earlier in 2016/17 which saw further support to the agriculture community where a number of goods were reclassified to the 5% bracket, such as seed, farming plant and machinery, to name but a few. This shows SHG's continued commitment to support the farming industry especially given the drought circumstances we encountered in the last financial year.

Whilst we do not intend to change Corporation Tax and Income Tax rates for the coming financial year, the tax and revenue working group will be exploring options for broadening the tax base, ensuring those who have the ability to pay more will be targeted as opposed to targeting vulnerable people. Any additional revenues generated will be used to finance essential public services. Some of the options that will be explored over the next 12-18 months include the options of introducing:

Land Tax - to encourage the productive use of land and stimulate the movement of land in the market;

Property or Empty Property Tax - to increase the availability of homes to rent or buy;

Inheritance Tax - to help balance the social costs of an aging population;

Infrastructure Levy - to help fund infrastructure growth;

A broadening of the Service Tax - which will help capture the benefits of increased tourism spending

These are some of the options that will be explored in detail with the new Legislative Council, followed by a detailed public consultation on the issues to ensure there is an understanding of the proposals and buy-in from the community.

Turning now to Fishing and Farming, Mr Speaker; whilst we are working to preserve future fish stocks, we are also supporting the Fisheries Corporation to maximise the value of our fish, ensuring that quality is preserved through the distribution line and ensuring our fishermen get the best price per kilo for their catch. We are pleased to announce that SHG will be supporting the Fisheries Corporation with a continued contribution to the running costs of £180K, up from the £120K in 2016/17.

In addition, I can confirm Executive Council has approved a further one-year exemption on the customs duty for fuel for the fishing industry, this will mean fishermen continue to access fuel at a subsidised rate. I'm sure this will be welcomed by the industry as we look to implement the fishing strategy in the coming year. Mr Speaker, this is one of the key industries where we have a resource which we can exploit in a sustainable manner for the benefit of the fishing sector and our economy as a whole.

Turning now to Minimum Wage, Mr Speaker; I am pleased to inform the House that the Employment Rights Committee completed the consultation in reviewing the minimum wage, and a recommendation has been accepted by Executive Council and notice has been given that with effect from 1 August 2017 the minimum wage will increase from £2.60 to £2.95 per hour for adults 18 years and over and the new rate for young adults between the ages of 16 - 17 is £2.00 per hour.

Mr Speaker, this is indeed good news for our working community and especially those on low incomes, this will also go some way in assuring that no one falls into the poverty trap.

Closely linked with the minimum wage is the annual review of the Minimum Income Standard, (MIS), which is based on the retail price of goods within the shopping basket. The recent exercise has seen an increase in the price of goods in the shops and as a result there will be a 3.4% increase in Income Related Benefits (IRB) and Basic Island Pension (BIP). This means that IRB will increase from £59.60 to £61.60 and BIP will increase from £61.60 to £63.70 per week which came into effect from 1st April. This increase, whilst small in real terms, will make a difference to those in receipt, the increase to the IRB and BIP since the introduction of the MIS is now around 25% in the last four years. SHG continues to support the most vulnerable in our society. More work will continue in improving the system trying

to make it as fair and a complete review of the Social Benefits system will take place in 2017/18.

Mr Speaker, I remember being the Acting Financial Secretary when the Members of this Council were elected back in 2013, I think together this Council, officials and NGOs have been able to make tremendous progress over the last four years, it has not always been easy but what I have found over the time is that everyone has been working towards the same goal of improving the quality of life for all on St Helena and this has to be good for the Island. The challenges have been great – we've had the WASS Inquiry, delayed start to scheduled air services, delayed announcement to the extension of the RMS, the drought, the recent break down of the RMS and subsequent access to the Island, but let us dwell on some of the positives:

We have a new Airport that works and is fit for purpose especially given that ASSI has recently certified the airport indefinitely.

We had our first large charter operation to bring home our fellow Islanders.

A new commercial air service is likely to start later this year.

We've had the introduction of the Minimum Income Standard.

We've got a new jetty and sea rescue facility in Rupert's.

A fully refurbished Hospital offering significantly improved services.

The average wage has grown significantly over the past four years and continue to rise and we had a 47.2% rise in public spending on core services since this Council was elected back in 2013.

Mr Speaker, this Council will be dissolved on 20th May, our thanks are extended to all Members past and present for their hard work over the past four years. We look forward to working with and supporting the new Council in their endeavours later this year and I would encourage everyone on the electoral roll to take this opportunity to use your vote to determine who they want as the future leaders of our Island.

Mr Speaker, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all those who have contributed to this budget, including Elected Members, directors, senior managers and their staff and especially to my Corporate Finance team for their continued hard work and dedication in developing this budget, I would like to make special mention of the Assistant Financial Secretary, Mr Nicholas Yon, the Accounting and Service & Budget Manager, Sara Benjamin, and the Head of Financial Services, Connie Stevens, for their countless hours over the past couple of months in being able to present this budget to you today.

Mr Speaker, I started by saying this is my first Budget Speech, and I think it is important to set the tone for the year ahead. I have tried to be open and honest about the Island's performance over the past year, what we have done well and what we have not done so well. I've also outlined what the Island intends and needs to implement in the year ahead. As an Island we are at a crossroads in our history. Yes we have our problems just like any other nation and whilst some might feel deflated with the setback to the start of commercial air services and the recent issues around access to the Island, we have an opportunity in this year like none we have had before, to change the outcomes for our Island and set us on a path where we can eventually take back more control of our own destiny.

Scheduled commercial air services are expected to start in 2017, something that we have waited on for so many years, so I call on everyone on the Island to give it a chance, more visitors means more money in the economy and more well paid jobs, more spending which results in more taxes which will support essential core government services and allow

additional support to the most vulnerable members of society to ensure that they are not left behind.

Mr Speaker, this budget presents an opportunity to take advantage of the potential benefits of air access, one which will only come around once and it is our role to make sure that we make it work for the people and the island as a whole. As an Island, if we accept the challenge and do so, St Helena will not only have a future, but a thriving one at that.

Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

(Applause)

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member for that exposition. Well Done. This is a Appropriation Bill, it takes a little different form from ordinary Motions, so at this stage now usually the Financial Secretary will beg to move that the Bill is adjourned for a certain day, perhaps on Monday and if he can get a seconder, it doesn't have to be put to the vote, I will approve it. Will you beg that the Bill is adjourned?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I propose we adjourn the Bill until Monday.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Is there a seconder?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much indeed. It doesn't have to be put to the vote. That's approved. Right, the next item on the list is the Elections Bill and I'm looking at time, we might be able to get it through and I allow you to take off your jackets too, so can we embark on the Elections Bill now, please?

Motion No. 2 – The Honourable Brian Isaac.

THE ELECTIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017.

The Speaker –

Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present that the Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2017, be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the whole House.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Is there a seconder?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Mover, you may speak to the Motion.

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, the Bill before this House today is to amend the Elections Ordinance 2009 to allow for the lowering of age for registration from eighteen to seventeen years and to remove the eligibility for registration of spouse and love partners who do not have St Helena status. Honourable Members will be aware of the public consultation that was led by the Social and Community Development Committee during the period 20th January to 7th February to obtain views and comments on the proposed changes to the Elections Ordinance. Public consultation meetings were held in eight electoral areas around the island, dissemination of a questionnaire via the local newspaper and to the upper age students at Prince Andrew School and the social media. Members of the Social and Community Development Committee also received direct comments from individuals who had chosen not to attend public meetings or to make their views known via the questionnaire or social media. 125 persons were in favour of amending the legislation to allow only persons with St Helena status to vote, 15 persons were not in favour. 72 persons were in favour of lowering the age to 17 years while 57 persons were not in favour. 65 persons were in favour of making it compulsory for persons who meet the criteria to register while 74 persons were not in favour. Comments and feedback were presented to the Social and Community Development Committee and all elected members when the majority of members agreed to proceed with only two amendments which are – to allow for persons with St Helena status to be registered and to lower the age from 18 to 17 years. It was also agreed that persons can't be registered, who do not have St Helena status will be allowed to remain on the register up until the including the 30th January 2020. Mr Speaker, however, Members will be aware that in the interim period applications have been received from persons to get on the provisional register, which was issued yesterday, 10th May. With this in mind, I propose to make an amendment to the Bill at committee stage to ensure that spouses and life partners who do not have St Helena status who recently apply can also be included on the register up until 2020. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. I put the question that the Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2017, be approved in principle and referred to a committee of the whole Council. The question is now open to debate. Any Honourable Members wish to speak? Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I welcome this amendment with open arms, I think St Helena has been calling out for something like this as our demographic on the island it will support it in terms of getting the whole population involved with the democratic process and it will also prepare those younger constituents, if you like, to be more involved and aspire to perhaps become politicians themselves in the future, Mr Speaker, so I look forward to this amendment coming into force. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, may I seek clarification on something that the Mover mentioned as the purpose of this Bill he stated that it is to remove the eligibility for registration of spouses and love partners who do not have St Helena status, so can I have some clarification on that because I thought it was life partners and not love partners? Thank you.

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and my Honourable Friend earlier on said about bells ringing in her ears, I'm sure that she heard quite clearly or haven't heard quite clearly what I meant, it means life partners and not love partners. Maybe they have love bells ringing in their ears. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Okay. Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean, are you continuing?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean –

Yes, Mr Speaker. Thank you for that clarification, my Honourable Friend. Mr Speaker, I would like to ask the Mover that during the consultation with Prince Andrew School upper age students, two of the questionnaires that was returned stated, according to the information that has been provided by the outcome of the results of the consultation process, it states that comments suggested from these children that sixteen year olds should be able to vote since they are considered adults at the age of sixteen. So this actually is information I'm reading, Mr Speaker, for the benefit of the listeners, from information as the outcome of the public consultation results. Mr Speaker, I would ask the Honourable Mover why this hasn't been taken into account, also, during the consultation of the Ten Year Plan as the Honourable Financial Secretary mentioned in his budget speech earlier on, that it is the vision of the people of St Helena and the feedback that we had in the vision of the people of St Helena was lowering the age rate to sixteen year olds to be eligible to vote. Mr Speaker, children of the age of sixteen are allowed to go in a licensed premises, children of the age of sixteen can become a mother or father, which is a huge responsibility, but, Mr Speaker, it seem as though voting is not a responsibility or deemed as a huge responsibility. Mr Speaker, Members may say that when they went out for consultation on this, lowering the age, they went on the consultation at the age of seventeen. Mr Speaker, when I spoke to students I asked them the question were they asked if you lower the age to sixteen would you support this. They were only asked if to lower the age from eighteen to seventeen. As I mentioned, Mr Speaker, when the consultation was taking place they consulted on lowering the age from eighteen to seventeen and Members may say, oh, we may need another consultation because we went and consulted on the age of seventeen and not sixteen, maybe the Attorney General be able to give me an advice on if another consultation needs to take place if the original consultation was for the age of seventeen and not sixteen? Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Is there any other Honourable Member who wishes to speak to the Motion? The Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise in support of this Motion, the Election (Amendment) Bill, 2017. This is a short Bill to lower the age for registration from eighteen to seventeen. I fully support this Bill, Mr Speaker, it is the beginning of giving our young people more responsibility, I don't believe that the Bill is saying that sixteen year olds is not responsible.

This is the first step, I believe, in a process and this was the decision, I believe, that elected members took following the consultation, so I fully support this, I welcome this, as my Honourable Friend, Councillor Buckley said, that there is an age demographic and we need to be aware of that and take some action to lessen the impact and I see this as a very first step. I think once this goes through the new Council and constituents themselves can follow the process and see how it works and it will be the start of encouraging our young people to take responsibility in the island's political affairs. You only have to look around this table, Mr Speaker, to see the, I ain't gonna say it, the demographic is a good word and not the other one, thank you, Financial Secretary, so I therefore support the Motion. It also makes that small amendment as a transitional one to protect those spouses and life partners who is already on the electoral roll, so I think it will be a good day for St Helena, another good news story I may add, Financial Secretary, so I fully support it. Thank you.

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 this, especially looking at including seventeen year olds and enabling them to be part of the political and democratic process and I hope that they will, that we can encourage them to come onboard and to do take part and encourage them to get registered and to use their vote. There's a lot to be said about trying to include people at a younger age to be a part of this process and I think the research has shown that if they are involved at a younger age then they will take this process on into later life and, as my Honourable Friend here made reference to, without appearing to be ages, the demographics around this table is quite opposite to what we're trying to encourage with this Bill, so I do support it for that reason. I also need to declare my interest as a love partner, sorry, my husband was one of those that is registered but does not actually have St Helena status at the moment, there is an interim solution to allow the people who are registered to give them that time up until 2020 to enable them to become registered and I hope that there are spouses, life partners, husbands, wives who will take advantage of this as well, we need as many people as possible to be taking part in this. We have the elections looming and I would encourage people to make sure they are registered and to use their vote, so I do support this, I understand my Friend here was saying about lowering the age to sixteen, but I think I feel and as we have debated at length in various houses that this is a staggered approach, I'd like to see it come down eventually to sixteen, but if we do it first at seventeen, we test the water, we encourage involvement and then we can look at taking it to sixteen. Thank you very much, Sir.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this Bill, it is a way forward, lowering the age from eighteen to seventeen allows people to be registered on the electoral roll and it also protects the spouse and life partners until 2020 so this is a huge step forward and in terms of encouraging young people to be able to get on the electoral roll and vote, so I support the Bill. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wishes to speak? The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this Bill. We have a General Election just over the horizon in a few weeks time and it will be excellent if our young people can become fully involved in that process and in actually being able to select who they want to represent them for the next four years and I think actually if this Bill is passed today it will be giving them a very positive message and indicating how much we would like to get them involved in the democratic process for St Helena. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Anybody else wish to speak? The Honourable Attorney General?

The Hon. Angelo Berbotto –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I just would like to answer the question of Honourable Scipio O’Dean. The terms of the consultation are set by the relevant Committee, in this case the Social and Development Committee, so there is no need to do another consultation, it is up to the Committee to set, to draft and to frame the consultation. During the advice that we gave to the Committee we highlighted the fact that for the referendum, for the airport referendum the age had been lowered to sixteen so that suggested a precedent, but it is up to the Committee to take that advice onboard or not. Therefore, I hope this answers Honourable Scipio O’Dean’s questions. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Attorney General. The Honourable Wilson Duncan?

The Hon. Wilson Duncan –

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this Bill, I think it is good that we encourage our youngsters to vote and take part in a political arena and that, so I urge all those that are eligible to vote, to cast their vote in the upcoming General Election. I support the Bill, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

I stand in support of the Motion, but I bit confused, right, we saying that the person of seventeen years old to vote, they can get married, they can have a baby, but they can’t smoke a cigarette or drink a beer, so I confused, so for me, if you’re gonna change anything, you should change everything, not just one thing. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Cyril George?

The Hon. Cyril George –

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this Bill. I have to refer back to Councillor Buckley’s speech and I feel guilty on this side of the table when he talk about demographics, so I fully support this Motion, Sir. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wish to speak to the Bill? Honourable Mover then, please, would you like to reply?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, thank you and I would like to thank Honourable Members for their support, I'd like to thank Councillor Buckley for his opening remarks on welcoming our younger people into the democratic process, Councillor Christine Scipio O'Dean, I'm sure she's being devil's advocate at this particular discussion and I know she will come back with a comment on that, but, Mr Speaker, this issue and question and concern from Councillor Christine Scipio O'Dean has been raised at a number of occasions at a number of forums and it was clearly supported by Members of this House that we would move one step at a time by lowering it to seventeen and see the outcomes of that and then hopefully when the new Government comes in and before another by election or General Election that can be addressed by the appropriate Committee and appropriate Members at the time. The beginning of any major race is the first steps and we're seeing this as the first steps to something of encouraging our young people into the process. Councillor Lawson Henry, Councillor Pamela Ward Pearce, Councillor Thomas, the AG for his support as well and everyone else for their support in this thing. Councillor Ellick, you are a member of my Committee and under my portfolio you have the opportunity to put issues forward when it comes to changing anything with our young people that you feel unhappy about, you are in a much better position than the majority of members because you are a member of the Committee that is responsible for such amendments or taking legislation forward. On that note, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank everyone and thank my Honourable Friend and I hope that my response has answered her concerns. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Can I rise on a point of information, Sir?

The Speaker –

Yes, you may.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Being on the Social and Community Development I did raise that in the House to my Honourable Chairman only to find that most of the members felt that smoking a cigarette or having a beer is bad for your health, so there I rest my case.

The Speaker –

Okay, thank you, Honourable Member for that explanation.

Question that the Election (Amendment) Bill, 2017, be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the whole Council, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

Mover, your turn, Sir?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that Council do resolve itself into a Committee to consider the detailed provisions of the Bill.

The Speaker –
Is there a seconder?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –
I beg to second, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –
Thank you very much indeed.

Question that Council resolves into a Committee, put and agreed to.

Council in Committee.

The Chairman –
Alright, so we take the clauses as we have it now, I'm in the Committee of the whole Council. I put the question that the Title, Enactment Clause and Clause 1 do stand part of the Bill.

Title, Enactment Clause and Clause 1.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –
Clause 2? There's no amendment to Clause 2, is it?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –
No, Sir.

Clause 2.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –
Clause 3?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –
Mr Speaker, at this stage I seek your permission to move an amendment to Clause 3?

The Chairman –
Yes, sure.

(Note: Problem experienced with sound system)

The Speaker –
It would be nice I expect to adjourn, yes. Maybe at this stage we could make a proposal to adjourn and then we might as well adjourn now and come back on Monday. Would you like to make a proposal, please?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn until Monday morning, 15th May at 10.00 am.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Is there a seconder to the Motion?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Alright, thank you very much indeed.

Question that Council adjourn until Monday, 15th May at 10.00 am, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much for the day, we now need to, some of us need to go to the Public Health, is it? Thank you very much, Council is adjourned.

The Hon. Pamela Ward Pearce –

Mr Speaker, as a point of information, Sir, the reasonHospital today, I'd like to alert Members it is International Nurses Day and..... Thank you.

The Speaker –

Alright, thank you. Right, let's do the official thing.

Council adjourned.

