

ST. HELENA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE SPEAKER

The Honourable Eric William Benjamin

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

The Honourable Chief Secretary	-	Mr Roy Burke
The Honourable Financial Secretary	-	Mr Dax Richards
The Honourable Attorney General	-	Ms Sara O'Donnell

ELECTED MEMBERS

The Honourable Clint Richard Beard
The Honourable Cruyff Gerard Buckley
The Honourable Gavin George Ellick
The Honourable Corinda Sebastiana Stuart Essex
The Honourable Anthony Arthur Green
The Honourable Lawson Arthur Henry
The Honourable Kylie Marie Hercules
The Honourable Brian William Isaac
The Honourable Cyril Kenneth Leo
The Honourable Christine Lilian Scipio O'Dean
The Honourable Derek Franklin Thomas
The Honourable Russell Keith Yon

CLERK OF COUNCILS

Ms Lydia Buchanan

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Friday, 23rd March, 2018

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 Richard Fenwick)

3. ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT

Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen and radio listeners.

Good morning and welcome to this First Sitting of the Fourth Meeting of the Legislative Council.

As has been customary, The Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of St Helena has again attended our meeting to open it with Prayer and I would like to thank him for the support that he has given to this Council

It is pleasing that Mr Merlin George has responded so willingly once again to perform the ceremonial duties of Mace Bearer and for that I express my thanks , as I do also to the staff members at the Castle and SAMS radio for providing support at this meeting.

I welcome our new Hon Attorney General Sara O'Donnell and congratulate her on her appointment. I trust she will enjoy working with this honourable House as we strive together to improve conditions for the people of our lovely island.

Normally at these sessions I report on the movement of members of this council as they travel on duties abroad, and in keeping with that trend I wish to record the visit of three of our Honourable Members to countries abroad during the period 17 to 24 February. The Honourable Anthony Green attended the Overseas Countries and Territories Forum in Brussels, where many interesting discussions beneficial to St Helena, were held. He, I believe, was pleasantly surprised about the amount of interest that many of the membership has taken in this island. In that same period of time The Honourable Lawson Henry and the Honourable Clint Beard

attended Enterprise St Helena Road Show in Johannesburg, the Hon. Lawson Henry representing the Legislative Council (as Government representative) who was privileged to appear on VSN TV and the Hon. Clint Beard representing Chamber of Commerce. Both reported on the value that such opportunities provided in helping to promote St Helena's values and interests.

It is worth noting Hon. Members that the provision of an air service has greatly shortened the time Members need to be off-island to attend meetings and because of this we are privileged to have a full attendance at today's sitting.

Let us now turn to the business before this House today

There are 11 Sessional Papers to be presented, 8 Questions for Oral answers, a Supplementary Appropriation Bill and 3 Motions for debate. Our meeting will then conclude with the Adjournment Debate. I now wish Hon. Members well in their deliberations today and call on the Clerk of Councils to announce the next item of business.

Clerk of Councils.

4. PAPERS

SP08/2018 – The Hon. Financial Secretary

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 8/2018 – St Helena Government – Special Warrant No, 1 of 2017/2018.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 09/2018 – The Hon. Attorney General

The Hon. Ms Sara O'Donnell –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 9/2018 – St Helena Government – Statutory Report on English Law: 2017.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 10/2018 – The Hon. Financial Secretary

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 10/2018 – St Helena Government – The Second Supplementary Appropriation Estimates 2017/2018.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP11/2018 – The Hon. Financial Secretary

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 11/2018 – St Helena Government – Withdrawal Warrants.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 12/2018 – The Hon. Financial Secretary

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 12/2018 – St Helena Government – Statements of Expenditure in Excess Financial Year 2016/17 (Revised).

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 13/2018 – The Hon. Financial Secretary

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 13/2018 – St Helena Government – Rollover Budget 2018/19.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 14/2018 – The Hon. Financial Secretary

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 14/2018 – St Helena Government – Saint Helena Audit Service – Corporate Governance of St Helena Government Group Entities Performance Audit.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 15/2018 – The Hon. Financial Secretary

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 15/2018 – St Helena Government – Corporate Governance of St Helena Government Group Entities Management Responses and Action Plan.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 16/2018 – The Hon. Clint Beard

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper No. 16/2018 – St Helena Audit Service – Strategic Plan 2018/2019 to 2020/2021.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 17/2018 – The Honourable Financial Secretary

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 17/2018 entitled St Helena Government – A Bill for an Ordinance – the Second Supplementary Appropriation (2017/18) Bill, 2018. Mr Speaker, I can also confirm that I have a Certificate of Urgency in accordance with Standing Order 12 (1) and also the authority to proceed from the Governor in accordance with section 73 (2) of the Constitution.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP No. 18/2018 – The Hon. Financial Secretary

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 18/2018 entitled St Helena Government – Response to Recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee Recommendations and Progress Register as at 15th March 2018.

Ordered to lie on the table.

The Speaker –

Clerk, call the next item of business, please?

5.

QUESTIONS

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

The Speaker –

The Honourable Gavin Ellick.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Will the Honourable Chairman of the Education Committee tell this House what progress, if any, has been made in respect of maintenance and upgrade of Francis Plain field?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Chairman of the Education Committee?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question, but regrettably must inform him that maintenance has only been routine and no upgrade work undertaken. The Honourable Member will be aware the Francis Plain playing field is not only used by Prince Andrew School but by the entire community. A number of local sports organisations make use of this field on a regular basis. The limited budget, which is allocated

to the task, is insufficient to regularly fertilise and irrigate the area. This could be considered band-aid treatment but could go some way to sustaining the field despite the extreme pressure. Maintenance of the field is managed by Prince Andrew School. There is a concern that the state of the field has deteriorated considerably over the last, past several years, largely due to heavier and continuous use. The recent drought, for example, raised serious concerns. At the same time, discussions with the various organisations that use the field have indicated that they are generally unwilling to give up their planned usage of the field to allow the major maintenance activities that would be required for a significant upgrade. There is widespread reluctance to dispute the various scheduled sporting events even bearing in mind the positive outcome for all users. Prince Andrew School recently attended minor refurbishment on the area adjacent to the Pavilion which is usually used for parking. Over time serious dips and holes form on the edge of the road prevented real difficulties for drivers. Fill was brought in and that area was levelled and temporary fenced off to allow the area to settle and grass to spread. Unfortunately this minor improvement work was disrupted with the community users pulling down the barriers and driving over the newly levelled area. School staff are understandably frustrated by this behaviour from members of the community. Mr Speaker, any significant restorational upgrading activities at the Francis Plain playing field will require support and buy-in from the entire community and especially from those adult organisations using the field regularly. Without this general support, good work at significant cost to St Helena Government can be easily undone by individuals who do not respect efforts to improve the field. Unfortunately any major restoration project will disrupt the use of the field for some time. Prince Andrew School is willing to engage with other stakeholders in developing a plan for this work but cannot do so without full community support and the necessary funding to complete the maintenance work.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any further questions? The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chairperson say if any action is being taken to upgrade the limited budget for maintenance of the Francis Plain sports field?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chairman of Education Committee?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I’d like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. The field is regularly assessed by the Directorate staff and the findings are always discussed with the Francis Plain User Group. The time that is required would depend on work undertaken to do an assessment would take key consideration and additional time following the upgrade and that would require to allow the field to be fully established, I’d like to say that there is no assessment been undertaken, but like I said in my response, if the users are willing to come together and do a schedule to try to improve the playing field and do an assessment, it all depends on budget, of course, Mr Speaker, so we probably need to go out and do some more work with the stakeholders on this.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chairman. Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chairman say whether any plans are in place to bring the relevant stakeholders together in order to form an action plan?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –
Mr Speaker, as I, in my initial response, I said that Pilling School is willing to engage with other stakeholders so there are stakeholders who are listening, Mr Speaker, we can do some work in doing that.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Chairman. Any other questions, any further questions? Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chairperson say whether some action will be taken with the relevant stakeholders in order to achieve an action plan for the maintenance of Francis Plain?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –
Mr Speaker, as I said on two occasions, we’re willing to engage. There is a User Group so we will follow that up.

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

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –
Could the Honourable Chairman say if any more maintenance to the terrace will be carried out because we have legume growing up that much is over there and little kids play over there andbeplanted, I find it really frustrating because every year in the Christmas period the Francis Plain field used to look immaculate, even the surrounding area

The Speaker –
Yes, you’re going into a statement.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –
Sorry. I wonder if any more consideration is given to the actual cutting of the grass round the buildings and in the terraces please, because that’s two years of normal maintenance?

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –
Mr Speaker, as I mentioned in my initial response that there is a maintenance programme in place for routine work and I’m certain cutting the grass would be included in that.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –
Will the Honourable Member say....

The Speaker –
Okay, don't jump me, Honourable Gavin Ellick.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –
Thank you, Sir. Will the Honourable Member say will it be this year they will cut the grass or next year?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean –
Mr Speaker, I do not have the routine maintenance programme in front of me, but like I said initially in my response there is a programme, I can't say it's going to happen today, tomorrow, I need to consult with the User Group to find out exactly when it is in the programme, but, of course, Mr Speaker, I am certain that the staff at Prince Andrew School see a need to do, to cut the grass, that's not in the programme that is scheduled for a particular time of the year, I'm certain that it will be addressed.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –
Mr Speaker, on a point of information, as the Sports Champion, the current sports strategy is currently being drafted by myself with input from Government officials and we're also looking for input to an international dimension from the NASAS sporting association and subsequent action plans should follow. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –
Thank you for that information. Next question, please?

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

The Speaker –
The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Financial Secretary tell this Council what are the current situation and future action plan regarding implementation of St Helena Government's exit strategy pertaining to the hotel at 1, 2 and 3 Main Street?

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

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, before I respond to the Honourable Member, I'd like to declare my interest as one of the Government Directors on the Board.

Mr Speaker, I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. In May 2017, Executive Council agreed the principles of a draft exit strategy for the St Helena Hotel Development Limited to be used in determining the final plan. These principles include –

- SHG should seek to at least recover the amount of the initial investment of £2.1m;
- Mantis, the Hotel Operator, should be offered equity to ensure that the hotel continues to operate and maintain to a high standard;
- There should be a majority local ownership;
- SHG should encourage inward investment to take a stake in the business;
- The timing of the SHG exit strategy should start after the first year the hotel is profitable, which, according to the model at that time was scheduled for the financial year 2010/2020 and should be done in a phased manner;
- Discussions will be needed with the Bank of St Helena as to whether the St Helena Government guarantee for the £1m can be released in due course and secured against the property.

Mr Speaker, it remains the intention of this Government to divest itself of the investment in St Helena Hotel Limited but only when the time and the conditions are appropriate and right to do so. It is still early days in the operations of the hotel and whilst December and January and February were busy months for the hotel the forward look in the short term is not as positive, especially during the upcoming winter months. To address this, Mantis is embarking on an intense marketing campaign in conjunction with the St Helena Tourism in an endeavour to bring more tourists to the island which will have positive spinoffs for the local tourism sector and also for the wider economy. Therefore, to be able to make an accurate forecast at this time after only five months of operations as to when the hotel will be profitable to trigger the exit strategy is challenging given all of these uncertainties. Executive Council have requested a paper which explores additional options for raising finance for the hotel, it is the intention to include options that could also see the start of the dilution of the 100% SHG ownership in the St Helena Hotel Development and this could be the starting point for the planned phased approach to the withdrawal from the industry. The completion date for this work is scheduled to be the end of May 2018, the paper will also revisit the principles of the exit strategy to reflect any changing circumstances. Thank you.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and thanks to the Honourable Financial Secretary for his response. Will the Honourable Financial Secretary state whether the Working Group that was planned to be set up earlier this year to deal with issues relating to the exit strategy is now in place?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, no, there is no action group at this point in time, however, as I said, that has been overtaken somewhat to the request that came from Executive Council to re-look at the financing options.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Is it still the intention to set up such a Working Group, Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, it would be, in due course, yes.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Financial Secretary. Any further questions? Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Would the Honourable Financial Secretary be a little more precise than ‘in due course’ regarding the actual establishment of the Working Group?

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I would suggest that the establishment of the Working Group would tie in with the work that needs to be done to be presented to ExCo in May of 2018.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any further questions from anybody? Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

I find it quite strange, because when I was asking this question that the exit strategy I thought was supposed to have been developed after the hotel was up and running in the first instance, not taking this length of time/

The Speaker –

What was the question?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

That was the question, why is it taking so long?

The Speaker –

Why has it taken so long? Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, referring to my answer that I previously gave, when the principles was taken to Executive Council in May of last year, they were just principles at that time, so in terms of developing the exit strategy there were a number of components and different issues that you

need to take into consideration, as, for example, the timing of when that needs to actually happen, so going back to my response earlier, we can't actually develop it, a full blown exit strategy at this point in time until we know all of the uncertainties that currently exist.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Mr Speaker, can the Financial Secretary give more detail regarding what aspects of the exit strategy can be developed now and what aspects would need to be developed at a later date, because I do not accept that no strategy can be developed at this point in time, although I do accept that there are other elements, there may well be elements in it that cannot be implemented at this point in time. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, just going back to my point earlier, as I said, for a paper that we're doing for Executive Council in May of this year one of the things will be looking at the dilution of SHG's shareholding in SHHD and that would be that part of the strategy that could actually take forward at this point in time.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. No further questions? Next item please, Clerk?

Question No. 3 – The Honourable Clint Beard to ask the Honourable Chairman, Public Health Committee

The Speaker –

The Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chairman of the Public Health Committee state what reassurances can be given to the public that with almost twenty-five percent of public sector spending being used in the Health Directorate the best outcomes for the island are being achieved?

The Speaker –

The Honourable Chairman of Public Health Committee?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question and with your permission this will be a lengthy response because it is important to reassure ourselves and the public about the Health Service on the island. We, as elected members, sign off on the strategic plans for various Directorates, including the Health Service, each year. We also sign off on the key performance indicators that we use to monitor success and I am pleased to say that we continue to make steady progress within the funding available within the Health Service.

Mr Speaker, in some detail, I will highlight the reasons why the public can be reassured that the best outcomes are being achieved for the island from the current level of health expenditure and Government funding.

The Health Service, within the funding made available, provides all level of health care to the people of the island. There is primary, secondary and specialist care made available through this budget. A good range of medicines are available through specialist pharmacy services and laboratory services to aid diagnosis and treatment. There is also protective services from Environmental Health which covers port control, pest control, food safety, including services to facilitate fish export.

Primary care covers immunisation for children to prevent killer diseases; every child on the island has been fully immunised to prevent all these deadly diseases. It also covers child welfare services, which includes finding issues with growth and development early, checking children for health issues when at school, including checking children's teeth and oral health in general. This is good spend as this protects and promotes the health of our children.

General outpatient care is also part of primary care. This works well within clinics, accommodating up to two thousand outpatient appointments each month.

Getting an appointment to see a doctor is within a waiting time that would be an envy of many first world health services, including the NHS. In the NHS, eighteen weeks is the average waiting time for hospital appointments to see a GP can take several weeks. This is not the case on the island. To see a doctor in Accident and Emergency Room may take up to four hours minimum in the UK; this is not the case on the island. I can therefore reassure the public that access to health care is, indeed, very good on the island.

Mental health care is also part of primary care and is available on the island. This is linked to community care which includes occupational health service, educational – school nursing and diabetic support. This is a good, broad range of primary care service indeed. All of these are available at point of need with little or no delay.

Routine dental service and laboratory service are part of primary care services, indeed, most areas of basic health care are here and offered on the island.

Secondary care on a remote island continues to improve. Patients have access to a surgeon, obstetrician, anaesthetist, medical specialists, general practitioner and an orthopaedic surgeon. There is CT scan, X-ray, ultrasound and laboratory facilities, all of these facilities are immediately accessible. There is minimal cost to the patients for these high cost facilities at point of need. Last year, more than a hundred people had successful surgery on island because of trauma and accidents. Another hundred plus cases had general surgery or emergency caesarean section to deliver babies.

In addition, the newly renovated hospital now has an intensive care unit. In terms of outcomes from these treatments it is remarkable that, unlike the case in many parts of the world, patients have little or no risk of acquiring hospital acquired infections, such as MRSA, which is a bacterial infection that kills and can be very difficult to treat. Complication rates are low and bed availability is such that no patients requiring admission have been denied admission to hospital. More recently the Health Service has begun some other major improvements to the Health Service on the island. These include tackling chronic diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension, expanding preventive measures to help prevent these diseases, in the younger generation in particular; implementing a modern, clinical data information system to collect better outcome data and monitor the health of the population. Bringing more and more specialist care to the island, including cardiologist, audiologist surgery and in due course we will also be able to offer joint replacement surgery on the island. All of this points to an improved health care service and I can reassure the public that we are benefiting from improved planning and efficient implementation of the strategic health plan for the island.

Specialist surgery care, while not available on the island, is made available overseas through current health care funding. There is an arrangement where care is made available to Saints at a fraction of what such services would normally cost at hospitals in South Africa. For example, the average cost of overseas medical care is £12,000 per patient and many of our patients pay about £200 to £400 in total for such treatment. This is a good outcome indeed as it reduces the financial burden on the individual patients. The Health Directorate also meets the cost of aeromedical evacuation which costs about £50,000 for the flight alone. During the current financial year, there have been at least eight medical evacuation flights. It is indeed reassuring that when one of our citizens need urgent, life-saving care we are able to provide the service. Mr Speaker, it is true and reassuring that we have an improved health service on the island and we are working hard to bring the care to first world and higher standards. It is also correct that we still have challenges, because we do not have all specialists on the island, nor can we afford some very high tech treatment or facilities, such as MRI, nevertheless I am satisfied and would like to reassure the public that health service on the island deliver good outcomes within the budget provided. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Thank you to the Honourable Chairman for a very comprehensive analysis. Will the Honourable Chair please indicate how long it would take for someone to get an appointment with a Doctor?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chairman of Public Health?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Yes, Mr Speaker, it varies depending on the nature of the need to see a Doctor, but what I can tell the Honourable Member that if there is a need for a patient to see a doctor straight away then a doctor will see that patient, but normally appointments can take up to a week, but longer in some cases if a patient wish to see a special doctor.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chairman. Any other questions from anybody? Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Chairman also tell the House how many Nurses are studying towards degree qualification?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Six at present, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Member. Will the Chairman also tell the House if the Nurses studying if their remuneration progresses as they achieve certain milestones?

The Speaker –

Yes, you may be drifting away from the main question, if you don't mind, so your supplementaries have got to be based around the outcomes. Honourable Member, if you wish to respond?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, although the Honourable Member is drifting away from the question I am able to provide the answer.

The Speaker –

Alright.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

The Nurses work towards competency-based pay and as they achieve their competencies their pay is adjusted accordingly.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, can the Chair please elaborate if a formal succession plan has been adopted with these Nurses studying a degree?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chairman of Public Health?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is hoped that the Nurses who are studying their degrees that they successfully achieve the degree they are studying, it will lead on to higher positions within the Health Directorate.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chairman. Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chairman of the Public Health Committee tell this House what arrangements are being made to ensure that proper pastoral care during medical referral journeys to South Africa for treatment, particularly with direct flights to Cape Town being discontinued in the current air service?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chairman of Public Health?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, I can assure the Honourable Member that arrangements, adequate arrangements are in place for patients that are referred for medical treatment overseas.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chairman. We're talking about outcomes of the money.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Yes, Mr Speaker. A lot of money has been invested within the Health Directorate over the years to ensure that St Helena has technologically advanced diagnostic machines, will the Chairman of Public Health Committee update the Council if these machines, such as the CT Scanner and Mammogram and other diagnostic equipment are in good working order?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chairman of Public Health?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, I'll have to get an update on all of the machines within the Health Service in order to provide that kind of reassurance.

The Speaker –

Okay, understandable. Thank you, Honourable Clint Beard. Any other questions? The Honourable Cyril Leo?

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Is the Chairman of Public Health aware that the Health Directorate Strategic Plan 2018/2021 states "We are committed to ensure health services are safe, effective, caring, responsive and well led. By effective we mean that people's care, treatment and support achieve good outcome, by caring we mean that staff treats people with compassion, kindness, dignity and respect"?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chairman of Public Health?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, I am aware.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

Will the Chairman confirm and reassure this House that the stated commitments of the Health Directorate Strategic Plan are being applied accordingly by all Doctors and all other Staff of the Public Health?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chairman of Public Health?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, as far as I am aware that is the case.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chairman.

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

Will the Chairman of Public Health provide elected members with a list of all the complaints Public Health has received from patients and constituents over the last six months?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, I can provide that information now.

The Speaker –

You can provide it now? Alright.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, there were five formal complaints received over the last two-year period, each with a different concern. However, there were at least fifteen incidents where the Director of Health met with relatives, patients, their representative and politicians to discuss areas of overseas referral either who had concerns because there was perceived delay in sending people overseas or a decision was made not to send them overseas and they would like the decision overturned, all of these issues were resolved.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Cyril Leo?

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Okay. The Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Could I ask my Honourable Friend, the Chairman of the Public Health Committee, is there a maintenance programme in place for the appropriate diagnostic equipment? Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, the Honourable Lawson Henry. Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, I can assure the Honourable Member there is a maintenance programme in place for the appropriate diagnostic equipment and in many cases specialists have to be brought in to maintain the equipment and recalibrate the equipment.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, will the Honourable Chairman of Public Health tell this House if there are medical health care appointments readily available or is there a waiting time period?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Christine Scipio O’Dean. The Honourable Chairman of Public Health?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Again, Mr Speaker, it varies. There are occasions when medical appointments are readily available, on other occasions there are waiting times.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –

Will the Hon. Chairman of the Public Health say if there are dental care appointments readily available or is there a waiting period time?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, if it’s an emergency the dental care will be provided straight away, other than that it’s taken through appointments.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Christine Scipio O’Dean –

Sorry, Mr Speaker, will the Chairman of Public Health say what is the waiting period time for the dental appointments?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

For routine dental checks it can take up to six weeks, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other questions? The Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chairman of the Public Health Committee tell this House what measures are being implemented to ensure that clinical governance is in place so as to reduce the risk of clinical errors leading to serious untoward incidents and potential claims of damages?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Derek Thomas, Chairman?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, there is a clinical governance and consumer engagement lead practitioner in place.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chairman. Is your button on, Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Yes, Sir. Yes, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, will the Chairman of the Public Health Committee tell this House if outpatient clinics are still operating normally all over the island?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chairman of Public Health?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, the outpatient clinics throughout the island are operational now, but there has been times when clinics had to be cancelled due to the unavailability of doctors dealing with other emergencies.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Clint Beard, still on the button?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chairman advise if there are sufficient staffing?

The Speaker –

Honourable Derek Thomas, Chairman?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member will be well aware of the challenges the Health Service face with recruiting staff and the Health Service obviously do their best to engage the services that the Hospital service needs, but there are great challenges and at times there can be great delays in recruiting suitable staff for the hospital.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chairman. Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I don't know if this will be a statement, but would the Honourable Chairman say if this would really hamper patient's needs?

The Speaker –

What was the question, Sir?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Would the capacity hamper patients' needs?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chairman of Public Health?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, the Health Directorate ensures that there are average coverage available, but are looking at other ways to improve staffing.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chairman. Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Thank you, Sir. Can my Honourable Friend tell me how many doctors are on the island and what are their specific roles?

The Speaker –

Well, we're really talking on the outcomes of the money being spent, so, you know, is there any point in asking that question, how many doctors on island?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Yes.

The Speaker –

Answer it please?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, I can tell the Honourable Member there are six doctors at present on the island.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Can the Chairman tell me if there are adequate roles for these doctors or are we still coming up short?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, I can assure the Honourable Member that the six doctors in place are adequate at this time.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other questions, please? Then I call the next item of business.

Question No. 4 – 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 Council what action is being taken with regard to increasing the number of scheduled flights to and from St Helena?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Madam. The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for her question. Regular reviews have been built into our planning with South Africa Airlink, the service provider, and as members and the public will be aware, we're now coming up to the sixth month anniversary of the first scheduled flight and discussions about the review process are already underway. As part of this review, we've started the work to consider requirements for additional flights. The early indicators, of course, from the operations to date are that there will be peak periods when additional flights are required and we may have just seen a period where that is evident. We are investigating this further and this work is in progress so updates will follow in the coming weeks, but Honourable Members will be aware that this issue has been raised regularly and repeatedly with colleagues in DfID, not least during the recent FAM, Financial Aid Mission at the end of January and early February and progress has been made. We're discussing when rather than if, which I think is a good sign and through various channels we're collecting data which supports the case for an additional flight or flights and at the same time we continue discussions with Airlink about technical stop in Namibia as well as a desire to reinstate the service to and from Cape Town, all of which has a bearing on the additional flight or flights. We all recognise the need for additional flights and we're focused on delivering that at the earliest possible date to allow travellers time to book well in advance. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, I thank the Honourable Chief Secretary for his initial response. He mentioned that there are regular reviews, can he elaborate on the frequency of these regular reviews, are they monthly, quarterly or what?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'm sorry that my answer wasn't clear enough. The review is a six-month review, as I indicated we're coming up to that sixth month period, and the review process or discussions about the review process are currently underway.

The Speaker –

Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Will the Honourable Chief Secretary also share with Council who actually participates in this review forum?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yes, indeed, I will do that.

The Speaker –

Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

May I ask whether this will be done in writing or how this information will be communicated to members by the Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

I'm very happy to do that in writing, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Okay, thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

May I ask the Honourable Chief Secretary to elaborate on what statistical data is being gathered and from what sources to inform decision making?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm happy to do so, the Statistics Office here, led by Neil Fantom, gathers information and has done for quite some time now on arrivals, so the data that we have or we are gathering at the moment from October through to today will be available shortly and published. I have in front of me, in fact, an initial draft of that which covers issues such as this – total arrivals to the island, air, sea and, of course, members will be aware that this period coincides with the RMS, so it's important to separate out the air travellers from the RMS travellers; yachts and other people and a rather strange category I suppose of not known, there are some people here that we don't know how they got here, but they're here anyway, which is always a worry, and then we break that down into, the purpose of the visit, so tourism and holiday, business, returning residents, people in transit, obviously people going up to Ascension, for example, and then we look at nationality issues as well – British, St Helenians, South African, other European, other nationalities, and, again, that very strange category of not knowns in there as well, so that's the basis upon which we break it down. Total numbers coming is important, but one of the other, I think, very important issues, for us to try to establish is the forward projection of those people who might want to come. What we don't know at the moment is those people who are trying to book a ticket with Airlink who fail because, for example, the plane is full, so that information is important, it's difficult to establish that information, because you don't know what you don't know, there's no wait listing system in place with Airlink and I'm familiar with other jurisdictions who have great difficulty trying to assess those people who can't actually book, but that's the basis of the information that we're collecting.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Once again, I thank the Chief Secretary for his very frank and open answer. Is there any plan in place to put a wait listing system in place?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, we've had these discussions with our colleagues in SA Airlink and the booking system doesn't allow for that sort of thing so it becomes very difficult to do so. We're exploring to see if there's a way in which it can be done, but at the moment as we stand or sit here, it's not being done.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Is the Honourable Chief Secretary also fully aware that the fact that it is known that there is only a weekly flight may, in fact, deter potential visitors from actually attempting to book passages if they know, for example, that they would only be able to be away from their work for, say, two or three days whereas if there was an option of a mid-week flight considerably more people might take advantage of it?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Yes, Mr Speaker, those factors are known and it's well recognised that that's a limiting factor for us as well. Some people don't have the luxury of choosing the dates on which they travel because their work holiday is set in stone and it does present a limiting factor as far as tourists coming to the island, but it's well known.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Sir. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

And will the Honourable Chief Secretary kindly confirm that that limiting factor will be taken into account alongside the data available in the decision making process regarding a second flight for St Helena?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yes, yes it will.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Any other questions? Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Is there any intention to have the second flight originating from somewhere different to the original location?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary? Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm assuming the Honourable Cruyff Buckley means other than Johannesburg, so, yes, I think I've indicated earlier in my answer that consideration is being given to the transit in Windhoek, but also to reinstating Cape Town, but at the moment, as far as I'm aware, we're not considering an originating destination other than those two.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

Can the Chief Secretary state from the data he's got in front of him what percentage of the passengers arrived in the last six months were actual tourists?

The Speaker –

Yeah, alright, just you're drifting slightly away, what's the intention, what has happened. Okay, Chief Secretary, I think so.

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. The percentage of total arrivals so we're talking C and F at the moment is about 40% who are here for tourism or holiday.

The Speaker –

Any further questions? Next item, please?

Question No. 5 – The Honourable Cruyff Buckley to ask the Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Speaker –

Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. In relation to the divestment of many non-core services of the St Helena Government, including the redundancy and downsizing of many services after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in 2012,.....

The Speaker –

You have to read exactly as on the paper.

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

... can the Honourable Financial Secretary advise what savings has St Helena Government made in tendering these works to the private sector since this process has been implemented?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. Mr Speaker, since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in 2010, there have been just four divestments, the Poultry Unit, the Firewood Service, the Cleaning of Government Properties and Utilities. Prior to this under SHG's outsourcing policy adopted in 2007, SHG divested the Sawmill Service, the Hospital Laundry Service and the Vehicle Inspection Service. In most cases, Mr Speaker, there has been no direct cashable savings achieved, that said, there is a plausible explanation. When these services were a part of SHG there were a number of hidden costs which, because of the way SHG is structured, were not easily identifiable. Costs such as administration, insurance, depreciation and asset replacement are not obvious expenditure for SHG when you look at our current modified cash based budgets, but they are necessary expenditure for a private sector organisation to make it profitable and sustainable. This was also highlighted in the findings of a review in 2007 on the outsourcing strategy, sorry, the review was carried out in 2010 on the outsourcing strategy, which concluded that in all cases when all indirect overhead and long-term costs are taken into account, costs to Government are likely to be reduced. These cases illustrate that whilst outsourcing can superficially appear to be more expensive to the Government, when all indirect and overheads are taken into account it is likely to be cheaper. However, it may take time for these cost savings to be realised and in the short term may lead to increased costs in SHG and the implementing department". Mr Speaker, there are less obvious but equally important benefits to SHG, such as the private sector being able to respond more quickly to the changes in the environment, businesses having opportunities to diversify and grow and SHG will be able to have tax benefits from growth in incomes and taxable profits from those organisations. Mr Speaker, I think it's also important to understand the basis of why services were divested. Whilst cost is obviously a significant component it is not always the only driver. For example, the divestment strategy focuses on a range of criteria to support a divestment. These include other factors such as rebalancing St Helena's economic activity in favour of the private sector and growing the third sector where appropriate. Key to any future divestment is the need to fully understand the cost of providing a non-core service at a price that represents value for money and justifies the use of the very limited resources we have available.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Financial Secretary. Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I thank the Financial Secretary for his comprehensive answer. Does the Financial Secretary feel there would be more benefits from economy of scale if these projects were collected together?

The Speaker -

Yeah, one of our Standing Orders says you can't ask for an expression of opinion and that's what you're asking.

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

I didn't realise that, Mr Speaker. I stand down, Mr Speaker, thank you.

The Speaker –

Any further questions? Next question, please?

Question No. 6 – The Honourable Derek Thomas to ask the Honourable Chairman of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Could the Honourable Chairman of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee tell this Council what provision is being made to enable boat owners to construct, repair and maintain their boats now that the boat shed is no longer available for this purpose?

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Russell Yon –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the Honourable Derek Thomas for raising this question. Now that the boat shed is being temporarily released to two businesses, boats are stored and repaired on the wharf itself, including in the Coal Yard. The existing sea rescue tent can also be used for certain boat repairs. Having said this, it is recognised that space for construction and repairs is limited given the fact that containers are also stored in the Coal Yard. While some repairs might have been carried out in the boat shed it was not used effectively and mainly used to store boats. However, when the Port operations move to Ruperts this will potentially free up additional space on the wharf. In this regard, Honourable Members will be aware that a draft strategy master plan has been prepared by Colliers International Property Consultants for the seafront and it is pleasing to note that this plan makes provision for boat repairs to continue to be done on the seafront.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the Honourable Chairman for his response, but can the Honourable Chairman say why was the boat shed not used effectively for boat repairs?

The Speaker –

The Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Russell Yon –

Mr Speaker, I thank the Honourable Thomas for his question. The boat shed was previously used to primarily store boats and to carry out small repairs for boats. The premises is currently under a lease arrangement, as I've just said, to two businesses until the future of the wharf is determined. This has been done through the Wharf Development Group. A draft strategy

master plan has been received from Colliers International who were commissioned by the Wharf Development Group set up to propose the wharf once port operations moved to Ruperts. The plan is in the Working Group for consideration, bearing in mind that nothing can happen until the port operations to move. In June 2016, the Estates Strategy Plan panel in line with the Lands and Building Policy 2016 were asked to consider two expressions of interest received from two commercial dive operators for the lease of the premises. The boat shed was being repossessed and leases incorporating a rolling landlord only break clause which would determine the agreement absolutely at any time on three months advance written notice were agreed. The incorporation of the break clause were recommended to ensure that the grant of new leases would not in any way impact upon the overall development for the wharf being worked up by the Waterfront Development Group.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chairman. The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Is the Honourable Chairman aware that the use of the coal yard for boat repairs is not adequate at all?

The Speaker –

The Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Russell Yon –

As I said in my original answer, that we understand that the coal yard is not in its best capacity to continue this work, it is also being used at this moment in time, due to the restrictions of space at the wharf, for containers.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chairman. Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. In view of the boat yard not being adequate for boat repairs and the fact that nothing can be done until operations move to Ruperts, will the Chairman give an undertaking to investigate to see if improvements can be made for boat repairs in the meantime?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Derek Thomas. Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Russell Yon –

Mr Speaker, yes, I can give that reassurance to Councillor Thomas. Unfortunately we will have to also work with the operations that is undertaking at the wharf as well.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chairman. Any other questions? The Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

Can the Honourable Chairman of the ANRC Committee confirm that the fishermen were offered space at Ruperts to perform their boat maintenance but subsequently turned down?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Cruyff Buckley. Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Russell Yon –

Mr Speaker, I can inform my Honourable Member that no provisions at this moment in time has been made at Ruperts so that any boat works can be undertaken.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chairman. Any further questions? No further questions? Next question, please?

Question No. 7 – The Honourable Cruyff Buckley to ask the Honourable Chief Secretary.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. In relation to the divestment of many non-core services of the St Helena Government, including the redundancy and downsizing of many services after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, can the Honourable Chief Secretary ascertain the total St Helena Government head count before the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, the total number of staff made redundant and the current staff head count to date?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for his question. The total SHG head count before the MOU was signed stood at 981. The MOU, which was signed, as we know, in December 2010, required SHG head count to reduce to 790. We're talking at the moment about full-time equivalents. So this was carried out on a phased basis as follows: by March 2012 down to 913 employees. March 2013 – 849 employees. March 2014 – 790. The number of redundancies since the signing of the MOU is 27 and the breakdown as follows: 2011/12 – 8, 2012/13 – 14 redundancies, 2013/14 – 3 and 2014/15 – 2. In this regard, it should be noted that reduction in head count was achieved not only by redundancies but also by natural wastage, for example, people retiring or resigning. The head count currently stands at 835 people.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

I thank the Honourable Chief Secretary for his answer. Can the Honourable Chief Secretary say if there have been any negative impacts since the reduction in head count for the St Helena Government?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Negative impacts I'm assuming as a result of reduction in staff and redundancies. Staffing is always a very difficult issue, identifying the exact or precise number of people to do a particular function difficult, the Honourable Derek Thomas referred to some of the issues in the Health Service and it's very difficult to know how many people should operate a particular service. What we can say is that since that 790 figure you will see that the head count has gone up, so a lot of work has been done since I came here in 2014 to try to establish a better workforce planning methodology and that's one of the reasons why head count has increased again, identifying those areas where the reduction has had a negative impact and trying to find ways to address that. So inevitably as head count reduces there are unintended consequences, but I think in most cases, if not all cases, we've addressed those by recruiting additional staff.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

I thank the Honourable Chief Secretary for his answer. Basic math shows that for the signing of the MOU that 981 to the head count now of 835, we have 150 posts that we didn't have in 2010, can the Honourable Chief Secretary if there have been any positive benefits for the St Helena Government since the signing of the MOU?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

That's a very difficult question to answer, Mr Speaker. There's an obvious positive benefit in that it costs less for us to run our service, so that money can be, assuming that our friends in DfID decide to keep the budget the same, that money can be redeployed elsewhere. I think one of the key issues is about becoming more efficient and as part of the work that we've been doing over these last three or four years we are exploring continuous improvement processes and ways to become more efficient in what we do. I personally think that head count reduction is a bit of a blunt instrument, it doesn't necessarily deliver the efficiencies that you would wish to achieve, because in many respects being more efficient with the existing staff that you've got is a much better way delivering efficiency than simply reducing staff, but occasionally there's a need to do so if the funding isn't available and the service that we're required to deliver is an essential service, then you've got no option but to do that, so, you know, it takes a bit of skill, I would say, from the Directors who are responsible for these services. What you will be aware of, of course, is that we have a functioning airport at the moment, which is staffed in part by SHG staff, so there's one major, I think, improvement in our service delivery, there are lots of others, some of the issues that we've talked about over a number of months and years, for example, the Hospital, better delivery of diagnostic services, which are being achieved not through head count increase, but through upskilling of individuals who are already in the service and those sort of aspects of our service delivery deliver efficiencies and a better service to the public. For me, the most important thing is to identify the needs of the public and find a way in which we can deliver them in the most cost effective way and I think I would say that over the last three or four years we've started to deliver that much more than we've been doing before.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

I thank the Honourable Chief Secretary again for his comprehensive answer. There was mention of value for money, what mechanisms, because of now limited capacity, what mechanisms do we have to ensure that the entities which were divested are, indeed, achieving value for money?

The Speaker –

Yeah, we're getting a little bit away from, we are actually drifting from the main count, you asked about the head count before and after you're going down to what, value for money? Do you want to respond?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Well, I can answer him in part. The issues about the divested entities are separate, I would say, to the issue of head count. There is a process in place in St Helena Government which is conducted by the St Helena Audit Service which looks at value for money audits and we've got some of that perhaps to talk about a little later, so value for money is established in two ways, one of which is through audit process, which is rigorous and quite open and transparent in that respect, but also Directors are responsible for ensuring value for money from the budget they are allocated on an annual basis and through the MTEF process we try to achieve that every year.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, can I ask the Chief Secretary if, in a recent review of Corporate Finance was any recommendations made in relation to increased staffing and whether those, if those recommendations related to lack of capacity?

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for his question. The recent review did identify some shortages in terms of capacity in the Corporate Finance section. The Honourable Financial Secretary is currently recruiting to fill those posts. It's debatable, I suppose, whether or not the reduction in capacity in the Finance Section those years ago led directly to that capacity issue, but we are addressing that and the Honourable Financial Secretary is currently recruiting to fill those gaps now.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you.

The Speaker –

Right, you just said thank you. Any further questions? Then next question, please?

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

The Speaker –

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chairman of the Social and Community Development Committee tell this Council what procedures are in place to assist young offenders over the age of sixteen to gain work experience or obtain employment?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Madam. The Honourable Chairman of Social and Community Development Committee?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Whilst there are no formal procedures in place to assist young offenders over the age of sixteen to gain work experience or obtain employment, it is recognised that education, training and employment are important in terms of reducing the likelihood of reoffending. Probation Officers assist in this area by discussing individual needs and identifying opportunities with the cases they are working with. This may include making contact with the St Helena Community College if an individual expresses an interest in gaining accredited qualifications. In addition to this, Probation Officers may approach Directorates, employers or non-government organisations directly to set up work experience opportunities. In doing so, they must be mindful of any risk issues evidenced through the individual's offending behaviour. In this regard, Probation Officers are often asked to provide details of both previous and/or current sentences to provide this information to the employers. This can be in addition to vetting certificates required by the majority of prospective employers on St Helena. Those serving prison sentences also have the opportunity to access adult education in the form of English and Maths qualifications.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I thank the Honourable Chair for his response. Can he please indicate why there are no formal procedures in place to address these needs, which I consider to be key to the rehabilitation of young offenders?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Dr Corinda Essex. Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Mr Speaker, I cannot directly offhand say what are the historical reasons for that. What I can do is to make a note that perhaps that something that hasn't been done, but I also see that the response that I've given actually encompasses the Education and Employment Directorate and obviously there would need to be some discussion that would have to be carried out both with the SEDC and also with the Education in order to look at that and any other entity and the personnel that actually deals with ex-offenders.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chairman. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Will the Honourable Chairman give an undertaking in this House that this matter will be pursued with the relevant agencies, please?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Chairman?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

I can give that assurance, Mr Speaker, that I will follow that up.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any further questions? No further questions. Right, next item, please?

6.

MOTIONS

Motion No. 1 – the Honourable Financial Secretary.

THE SECOND SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (2017/2018) BILL, 2018

The Speaker –

The Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the Second Supplementary Appropriation (2017/2018) Bill, 2018 be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the whole Council.

The Speaker –

Is there a seconder, please?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, the Second Supplementary Appropriation (2017/18) Bill asks this House to consider the authorisation of £392k worth of expenditure. This Bill is a piece of good housekeeping to ensure that Directorates do not have expenditure in excess to that which has been approved by this House at the end of the financial year. The draft Bill has been compiled using the latest available forecasts for the financial year 2017/18. The Bill requests additional expenditure for Corporate Services and the Safeguarding Directorate totalling £22k. £342k is to be transferred from recurrent to capital expenditure for the Health Directorate and £28k is to

be transferred from capital to recurrent for the Police Directorate. This Bill increases the 2017/18 budgets for the respective Directorates which were approved by this House back in May 2017 and then subsequently at the Supplementary Appropriation in January of 2018. Mr Speaker, I'm pleased to advise that there is no requirement for a withdrawal from the Consolidated Fund to offset the additional expenditure. The additional funding required for Corporate Services and Safeguarding will be financed through under spends on the Technical Cooperation budget. If approved today, the subsequent withdrawal warrants will be presented to the Governor on the advice of Executive Council for approval. Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Accounting Officers, their teams and my team led by Mr Nicholas Yon, for their support in getting this Bill before the House today. Mr Speaker, we will provide the details of the expenditure for each Head during the Committee stage. I beg to move.

The Speaker –

It's just a requirement in any money Bill, it usually has to be adjourned until Monday in any appropriation bill, so you will need to ask that Standing Orders be set aside to allow the Bill to be concluded today or is it your intention that it's going to spill over until Monday?

The Hon Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I would need to ask for permission for Standing Orders to be suspended so the details provisions of the Bill can be completed today.

Question that Standing Orders be suspended, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

Then I put the question that the Second Supplementary Appropriation (2017/2018) Bill, 2018 be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the whole House. The Motion is now open to debate. Honourable Mover, do you need to move any further on this? It's just a little reverse that's all. The Motion is now open to debate. Any Honourable Member wishes to speak to the Motion? Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Mr Speaker, thank you. As the Honourable Mover has said this is basically a housekeeping exercise and supplementary appropriation is one of the accepted means of making adjustments to budgets when there is greater clarity regarding outturn through any financial year. However, for the benefit of the public, I would be grateful if the Honourable Financial Secretary could give a brief explanation as to why these figures have appeared before us today. We've discussed these in detail as elected members, which is why I don't think there will be many questions coming from Honourable Members regarding the figures before us, but I think for the listening public it is important that they are also aware of why this has become necessary. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Any other Honourable Member wish to speak to the Motion? No other Honourable Member wish to speak to the Motion. The Mover would like to reply?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. And, yes, I take the point from the Honourable Member. I did say in my exposition that we will provide the details of expenditure at the Committee stage.

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

The Speaker –
Honourable Mover?

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

The Speaker –
Is there a seconder?

The Hon. Roy Burke –
Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –
Thank you very much indeed.

Question that the Council do resolve into Committee, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –
The Speaker will now move into Committee.

Council in Committee.

The Chairman –
Thank you, Clerk. Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Mr Chair, could I request that Mr Nicholas Yon join us at the table for Committee stage, please?

The Speaker –
Yes, sure, by all means. Come forward Mr Yon.

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Mr Chair, we will also be considering the detailed estimates.

The Chairman –
Honourable Members will need to have their estimates available to be considered at the same time as we're going through the Bill. And because this is a money bill, an appropriation, we first of all need to work through the Schedules, the Schedules itself. Schedule I. Head of Expenditure – Head 15 – Police, in the sum of £28k. Mr Yon?

Mr Nicholas Yon (Assistant Financial Secretary) –
Thank you, Mr Chair. This request is for recurrent expenditure to be increased so Members will remember in January this year when we considered the First Supplementary Appropriation the Police Directorate requested an appropriation for capital expenditure for the new passport system. Subsequent to this they've identified that as part of those costs some of those costs are actually recurrent expenditure that, for example, the passports themselves, the licence fee that

they need to pay for the system, so what we're requesting now is that the monies, part of the monies, £28k that was appropriated for capital for the new passport system now be reclassified as part of the recurrent expenditure budget. So this will be covered from the existing budget within the Police under capital.

The Chairman –

Any questions, please? Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can I ask, Mr Chairman, I should say, can I ask why it wasn't recognised in January 2018 that the £40k that was approved was made up of recurrent and capital?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you. It was assumed at that time that all of those costs could be capitalized, but when you look at the Accounting Standards, those costs can't be, so that's why we need to make this tidy up exercise now.

The Chairman –

Thank you, Sir. Any other questions on that Head? No other questions on that Head.

Head 15 – Police, £28k –

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Head 29 – Safeguarding in the sum of £4k.

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you, Mr Chair. This is a recurrent budget request for travel costs that the Safeguarding Directorate had to pay for in January and this will be funded from a withdrawal from TC budget to cover that £4k.

The Chairman –

Any questions, please? No questions?

Head 29 – Safeguarding, £4k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Schedule I – Total -£32k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Schedule II – Head of Expenditure again, Capital Expenditure – Head 12 – Corporate Services, Support, Policy and Planning in the sum of £12k.

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you, Mr Chair. This request is for additional capital budget to cover additional costs required for the revision of the Laws of St Helena. Members will remember some time ago money was approved by this Council to revise the Laws of St Helena, during that process additional work was required and therefore an additional £12k is needed under the capital budget.

The Chairman –

Any questions, please? No questions?

Head 12 – Corporate Services – Support, Policy and Planning.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Head 23 – Health in the sum of £342k.

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you, Mr Chair. If I can start off by explaining that this is a transfer request from budget that already exists in Health under their recurrent budget and what they're proposing is that they take money from the recurrent budget put to capital budget to allow them to be able to purchase essential health equipment for that service. I won't attempt to pronounce all of the names of the equipment as I might get tongue tied, but what I can say is that there's equipment that is required for orthopaedic surgery and that's essential equipment they need to be able to deliver that service on island and in addition to that they also need a number of other replacement equipment and new equipment to allow them to be able to deliver the service at the Hospital and it's in the amount of £342k and, as I said earlier, this will be funded from a withdrawal from their recurrent budget allocation.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Any questions, please? No questions?

Head 23 – Health - £342k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Head 29 – Safeguarding in the sum of £6k. Yes, Sir?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you. This is a capital expenditure request for the purchase of a specialist wheelchair for a client in the amount of £6k.

The Chairman –

Any questions?

Head 29 – Safeguarding - £6k.

Question put and agreed to.

Schedule II – Total - £360k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Right, now we turn back to the main part of the Bill. The Title, the Enactment Clause and Clause 1.

Title, Enactment Clause and Clause 1.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Clause 2 – Consolidated Fund – Provision for Financial Year 2017/2018. Anybody wish to make any proposals on that, any questions? No?

Clause 2.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Thank you very much indeed. The Speaker goes back into formal session now.

Council Resumed.

The Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary, Bill to be reported.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to report that the Second Supplementary Appropriation (2017/2018) Bill, 2018, passed the Committee with no amendments and to move that this Council approves the said Bill and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. A seconder is unnecessary at this stage. I put the question that this Council approves the Second Supplementary Appropriation (2017/2018) Bill and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. I'm looking at the time; I think we can continue until about half past twelve maybe? Yes. Clerk, if you will call the next item, please?

Motion No. 2 – The Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that in accordance with and subject to section 102 of the Constitution this House empowers the Financial Secretary to authorise the withdrawal of monies from the Consolidated Fund in order to meet the expenditure necessary to carry on the services or

projects of the St Helena Government in the financial year commencing 1st April 2018 until the occurrence of either of the following whichever is the earliest:-

1. The expiry of four months from the commencement of the 2018 financial year; or
The enactment of the Appropriation Ordinance for the financial year 2018.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there a seconder?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, it's disappointing that I'm here today seeking support for this Motion to implement a rollover budget for the start of the new financial year 2018/19. However, it is a necessary request to allow the Government to continue to provide essential services from 1 April 2018. For the interest of the listening public, a rollover budget is the mechanism used to allow the business of Government to continue in the absence of agreeing a balanced budget through the appropriation process, as outlined in the Constitution. The approval of a rollover budget by a resolution of Legislative Council empowers the Financial Secretary to authorise the withdrawal of monies from the Consolidated Fund. Up to one third of the budget of the previous financial year for up to four months until the Appropriation Ordinance for 2018/19 is approved by this House and is enacted, and, which is, which happens on the earlier date. Unfortunately, as of today, we have still not received a financial aid settlement from the Department for International Development for the coming financial year 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019. We understand that the submission is with the relevant Minister for approval and we are hopeful this will be communicated soon. Mr Speaker, the rollover budget will restrict SHG spending to a maximum of £11.2m for the period and will be made up of a maximum budget for each service area as follows: Corporate Services – Corporate Support, Policy and Planning, the budget available will be £478,677; for Human Resources - £2,833m; for the Police Directorate - £483,333; for Corporate Finance - £2,267m; Economic Development - £361,667; Education and Employment - £1,080,333m; Health - £1,890,333; Environment and Natural Resources - £1,165,667m and the Safeguarding Directorate - £856,667.

Directorates are aware that no new spending initiatives can be undertaken until the final budget for the 2018 financial year is agreed and enacted. As a result, there can be no budget speech today. However, I will take this opportunity to inform members of the public of the changes that have been agreed which will come into effect which will have an impact. Some of these changes will come into effect from today.

Mr Speaker, as in previous years, I am announcing that as with effect from today there will be an increase in the rate of Customs duty on alcohol and tobacco. For alcohol, there will be a 4.4% increase in duty in line with inflation over the past twelve months. Tobacco will increase by 5.4% which is inflation plus 1%. These increases are in line with the current agreed policy implemented over the last three years. This will mean that the duty on a bottle of 330ml Castle Light will be 3p and 22p on a bottle of Wine, 61p on a 750ml bottle of Spirits with an alcohol content of more than 22% and for a packet of cigarettes the duty will increase by 21p. Mr

Speaker, the additional revenues generated from these increases will help to maintain the essential public services such as Health, Education, Safeguarding and the Police Services.

Mr Speaker, we are also pleased to announce that further changes have been agreed to support the delivery of the Sustainable Economic Development Plan to boost exports and to promote import substitution. Members have agreed the reduction for further agriculture and fishing related products from the 20% to the 5% tariff to encourage and support the farming and fishing communities which is hoped to increase local produce and reduce our reliance on imports. Further reductions in other essentials, such as certain baby products, which are currently classified as 20% will be reduced to 5%. To support the altogether wealthier national goal within the Ten-Year Plan by encouraging healthier lifestyles, Members have reduced the duty on many healthy options from 20% to 5%. To counter this, a number of other changes to Excise duty has been agreed which will see an increase and expansion of the sugar tax to goods with a high sugar content, for example, confectionary and juices. The full details of the revised Customs and Excise regulation will be published today. These changes will come into effect from 1st May 2018.

Mr Speaker, this is the second year in a row we have not been able to start the financial year in a way that provides certainty to the island and the community. This rollover budget, however, does ensure that we continue to provide essential frontline services. We are hopeful that we will get ministerial approval soon for the financial aid settlement and give the certainty the island needs over the coming year to allow us to start to take full advantage of commercial air services.

Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Members, the Motion is, in accordance with and subject to section 102 of the Constitution this House empowers the Financial Secretary to authorise the withdrawal of monies from the Consolidated Fund in order to meet expenditure necessary to carry on the services or projects of the Government in the financial year commencing 1st April 2018 until the occurrence of either of the following whichever is the earliest:-

- a. The expiry of four months from the commencement of the 2018 financial year; or
- b. The enactment of the Appropriation Ordinance for the financial year 2018/2019.

Honourable Members, the Motion is now open to debate. The Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, a rollover budget is not ideal to operate, but I support this Motion to allow services to continue within St Helena Government. I am aware that my colleagues and officials have been trying hard to obtain a three-year budget settlement with DfID to avoid these situations in the future. Mr Speaker, I support this Motion.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the rollover budget. As my colleague said, it is not the ideal situation that we wish to be in, but we're in a situation that we're able to move forward. I would like to take this opportunity whilst I'm here to thank the Financial Secretary and his

team and everyone else involved and my colleagues for supporting as to where we are today and I support the rollover budget and hope that the substantive budget be what we asked for. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there any other Honourable...Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, thank you, I rise in support of this rollover budget also. As my Honourable Colleagues have said, it is not ideal, it makes us look weak as a government, but I have to say, by no makings of ours. I will have some further comments to say on this in Adjournment Debate, but I support it. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, likewise, I rise in support of the rollover budget. We all know this is not ideal, it restricts SHG's spending and development and being able to progress. What is encouraging to see that we have been able to drop the duty, Customs duty on many essential goods from 20% to 5%, including farming and fishing products and baby products and high sugar contents goods have, the duty have increased, Customs duty have increased and we're hoping that this will go in support of the initiatives that are being undertaken to encourage more healthier lifestyles. Thank you, Mr Speaker, I give my support to the budget.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Derek Thomas. The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. It's extremely disappointing that we're once again here dealing with a rollover budget. This is not the first time and I think every time we hoped that it will be the last time and certainly that is my fervent hope today, because having a rollover budget is far from satisfactory. For a start, it creates a lot of work, which is basically additional to the already heavy workloads of the Corporate Finance team at a time when that time could be spent on dealing with other pressing issues. It also starts the new financial year on a note of uncertainty and that raises anxiety within the public, it also increases frustration within the public, because they are aware that there can be no new initiatives launched until the formal appropriation for the agreed settlement takes place and, in general, it is not conducive to a pleasant start to the new financial year and I do hope very much that in going forward SHG and its partners will be able to avoid this situation occurring on a far too frequent basis. Having said that, and I declare my interest as President of the Chamber of Commerce, it is exceptionally pleasing to note that there are going to be reductions in Customs duties for items that are heavily used in both agriculture and the fishing sectors. This is something that we've been campaigning for some time to achieve and it is very nice to see that that is going to come to fruition, but overall, although I have really no option but to support the rollover budget, I do express my deep regret and concern that we have been once again placed in this situation. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there any other Honourable Member? The Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Without harping on too long on the same hoist, Mr Speaker, I too am also extremely disappointed, I've raised my concerns with DfID representatives via a video conference and I would like to really see this be the last time we're in this situation, what's going to happen remains to be seen, it does not lend itself for the Government or anybody on the island to facilitate longer term planning, which is what the three-year settlement should hopefully offer us, I think it's a situation that could be easily avoided, Mr Speaker, and I look forward to seeing the next FAM team. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Anthony Green?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the rollover budget, but I would like equally to express my concern and disappointment that we don't have a budget, because at a time when we're making that transition from one place to another in trying to get economic development it's certainly of a big hindrance, it's also undermining the stability and confidence that we have of people, but I'm just wondering as well whether the Financial Secretary, however, would just comment, or whether it's a legal or financial situation, if what happens if we do not get a budget approved by in four months because I think the public out there need to realise the reality that we live in. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wishes to speak to the debate? No other Member, then the Honourable Financial Secretary, the Mover, please, if you'd like to reply?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank Honourable Members for your support. In response to Councillor Green's question, at the moment the Constitution says it can be extended for an additional period of one month under the Constitution, however, we will need to check the legal ramifications if, for example, we weren't able to have a budget settlement by the end of August this year.

The Speaker –

Thank you. You responded, okay. Alright then, Honourable Members, the Motion is, standing in the name of the Honourable Financial Secretary, in accordance with and subject to section 102 of the Constitution this House empowers the Financial Secretary to authorise the withdrawal of monies from the Consolidated Fund in order to meet expenditure necessary to carry out the services or projects of the Government in the financial year commencing 1st April 2018 until the occurrence of either of the following whichever is the earliest:-

- a. The expiry of four months from the commencement of the 2018 financial year; or
- b. The enactment of the Appropriation Ordinance for the financial year 2018.

Honourable Members, I now put the question.

Question put and agreed to.

The Motion is carried.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Members, we usually break at 12 o'clock, shall I go on and finish the thing or do you need a break now? Alright, okay, it seems that some want to break so we'll adjourn or suspend for one hour, we'll come back at 1 o'clock.

Council Suspended.

Council Resumed.

The Speaker –

Good afternoon, Councillors, we're in session now. Clerk, we'll call the next item.

Motion No. 3 – The Honourable Lawson Henry.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. First of all, could we indulge you and seek permission for the ladies and the gents who wish to remove their jackets?

The Speaker –

Yes, permission granted. Right, the Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this House believes it is in the best interests of St Helena that responsibility for the management of the island's utility services, meaning electricity, water and sewerage should revert back to the direct control of the St Helena government and resolves that an urgent assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of such an action should be undertaken to inform appropriate action. Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there a seconder?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Mover?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move an amendment to the Motion by deleting the words "should revert back to the direct control of" and inserting in their place "is subject to closer direction and control by".

The Speaker –

Yes, thank you. Is there a seconder to the amendment?

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

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Because there's an amendment on the floor, I have to put the amendment to the group. Anybody wish to debate or talk on the amendment, before I accept the amendment? No? I put it to the vote.

Question on amendment, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

That's just to the amendment only. Honourable Mover?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, by way of procedure, would you like me to read the amended Motion before I start?

The Speaker –

Yes, please.

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, this House believes it is in the best interests of St Helena that responsibility for the management of the island's utility service, meaning electricity, water and sewerage, is subject to closer direction and control by St Helena Government and resolves that an urgent assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of such an action should be undertaken to inform appropriate action.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. I now need a seconder for the amended Motion.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Now, according to Standing Orders, the original Motion will stay on the list until the amended Motion is dealt with. If the amended Motion fails, then it comes back into play, the original Motion, otherwise if the amended Motion passes, then the original Motion will fall away. Honourable Mover, you may now speak to your amended Motion and all Councillors will be debating the amended Motion.

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would first like to thank my Honourable Colleague, Dr Corinda Essex, for having the foresight and the courage to second this Motion. It is my hope that the House will support the Motion because not to do so would mean that we are accepting the status quo of our people and businesses being in utilities poverty. This situation cannot go on any longer; it is simply not an option. I've been thinking about this situation we find ourselves in with our utilities for a long time and been thinking about ways we could do better and have cheaper electricity. St Helena have one of the highest electricity costs per unit in the world. Before I go into detail of this Motion, I would first like to say that since the utilities was divested in 2012/13 we have seen a considerable amount of

investment into its infrastructure and network, including revamp of the Power Station and water infrastructure, all of which was funded by SHG through the capital programme provided by our partners in DfID. This has been very positive and good for our long-term development. We also know there have been considerable savings in fuel as a result of investment in solar and wind energy. Sadly, however, because of the huge operating and administrative costs of Connect St Helena none of these savings has been passed to the consumer and I will come back to this very point later, although it is accepted that the cost of fuel is frequently changing. I believe that the push to divest this service came from our partners in DfID, I'm not saying that the decision was wrong, what I will, however, argue it is the model for the divestment is not fit for the circumstances with which we operate on a small, isolated island. In the first place, most of the infrastructure development was carried out after divestment, therefore, SHG, as I mentioned earlier, had to pay for this through the capital programme during the intervening years and still provides a subsidy to Connect, the company formed and licensed under our Utilities Ordinance in 2013. In divesting the utilities, a whole new company was formed to deliver utility service, therefore, new offices, buildings and additional staff that would be required to operate a stand alone company. The administration costs alone for Connect is some £1.244m. This is where I believe the model for the divestment is not suited to a small population, because we had to re-invent a whole new administration and this was at the expense of the consumer, the poor people of St Helena. Given the size of the island, further work should have been done to consider as to how SHG, who still owns Connect, could absorb some of the administrative operation in entities that already exist in SHG. Examples of this is HR and Finance and other areas where administrative costs could have been significantly reduced. It is not too late to reconsider the model and I believe it would have huge benefits to the consumer. SHG is not only paying Connect a subsidy, but they likewise get the fuel to generate electricity free from duty, but even with the second subsidy we are not able to get cheaper electricity. My argument is because of the huge operating costs of having to set up a stand alone company this has sadly been at the expense of the consumer, our people, it has had a knock-on effect and added to the cost of services and delivery across the whole spectrum of our economy. The model for tariffs is like no other place as the more electricity you use the more you pay. This has done a lot of damage to our economy in terms of cost of services as it impacts across the whole range of those services. The regulatory system created is not linked to SHG development and no instructions is given to Connect or its Board from SHG. There have been no consideration to a lower unit rate during off peak times, in particular, the private sector who have to depend on electricity for our food security and other goods and services. Such consideration would go some way to making goods and services more economical and bring some equality to those on lower incomes. In 2014, when the solar farm was installed, I was with the Connect team when the public consultation was undertaken and I heard officials when they told the electorate that it would bring cheaper electricity to the consumer. This has not materialised, but we are faced with an administration bill by Connect of over £1m. If the model was changed, then some of this money would go to generating cheaper electricity. The reality is there is simply no incentive in the current model for Connect to do so, nor have SHG, who owns Connect, have even tried. We have simply allowed the status quo after divestment. SHG have not even reviewed the divestment to see if it have achieved its objectives, if any exist. This unsatisfactory position cannot go on any longer. SHG has a duty to ensure that divestment has delivered value for money and that it has brought benefits to the island. Two years ago, I had the opportunity of visiting one of the Dutch territories, namely Aruba. They face similar problems to St Helena with their utilities, but instead of divesting they put their utilities out to contract with conditions that were favourable to the people and their economy. They not only have cheaper electricity, but the public buildings, including schools, are powered by solar energy and the surplus are sold to the grid. There have been other innovative ideas in their

utilities. They bottle their own water, which is sold on the island and also exported. Electricity meters are fitted with computer chips to enable them to be read at a central point thus saving thousands of pounds for this to be done manually. The whole of their airport buildings are likewise operated by solar, including facilities to recharge electric vehicles, so it just shows that where there is a will there is a way. There is no shortage of either solar or wind energy on St Helena. The real issue here, we are simply not managing our utilities to the best advantage of the island and its people and often we import models from other places which is simply not suited to a small, isolated island community. In relation to solar energy, the House will be aware that SHG has an energy strategy that seeks to make the island a hundred percent green energy. I applaud this, much work has been done in conjunction with Connect to hopefully attract an investor to upgrade our systems to make this happen, the idea being that Connect would enter into a Power Purchase Agreement, PPA, to purchase the energy from the investor at a much reduced rate than they can generate with the existing system and model. I believe this is the right way for the island to go, but, however, from what I can see this is not going to bring any benefits to the consumer if SHG do not change the model. I say this with some confidence because I sit on the Group that is working on this strategy. If we are successful in entering into a PPA with an investor, it will stabilise the current unit cost to the consumer, but unless we can reduce Connect's operating costs then it will be just a status quo, and, Members, this can no longer be an option. This is why it's so important now for SHG to review urgently the current model so that in the event that we are successful in having a PPA then and only then we will see the benefits from this coming back to the consumer. St Helena is at the crossroads of its economic development, we have air access where Saints have risen to the challenge and have invested. If we are to reap the benefits of air access and support those businesses that took the risks then SHG must do all in its power to provide support and by this I mean energy, that is not only affordable, but clean. The current model for this is simply not working nor is it sustainable. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is your opportunity to make a difference for our people, support this Motion and force our Government to review the current model to one which has a much reduced operating and administrative cost and one that fits St Helena and is fit for purpose and is right for the island and our fledgling economy, and, more importantly, for our businesses to thrive and be affordable to our people. As have been seen, the current model has the ability to close down businesses, indeed, as we saw last year with one of SHG's state-owned entities and one of our most important industries, our Fisheries. SHG had to make an intervention to save this important industry, Connect did nothing other than their quest to recover the debt. In the talks with SHG that ensued to save the Fisheries, the first open response from one senior official was to let it close and sell fish from the back of a truck. There was no foresight or thought about how we could make this work better, but most importantly, as one of our leaders, no thought was given to the root cause which is the sheer cost of the utilities. This is where I see the problem lies, SHG create these situations, there is never any follow-up actions, we divested the utilities and we thought, job done, just hand out subsidy every year. Sadly, no review to see if it is working and we the people are expected to just carry on. Elected Members have been for some years now calling on the Government to review the current setup of Connect St Helena so that there is political oversight. No action has taken place in this respect. I can say too, as Members will be aware, that all SHG's state-owned entities have not escaped the eyes of the Chief Auditor and a report on all such entities with many recommendations showing SHG's status in taking real responsibility, Connect St Helena being one such entity. Therefore, Mr Speaker and Honourable Members, you could say this Motion is not only timely, but long overdue. SHG already has control through 100% ownership of Connect, it is then about how that control is exercised in practice. The Auditor's report on Governance of State-Controlled Entities highlights the current weaknesses and makes recommendations to provide improved direction to and accountability from these Boards so

that they come aligned with the SHG sustainable development objectives. In my view, this is the way forward in securing the improvements that I am today seeking in that the infrastructure are already there, SHG need to have an appointed Director or Chair on the Connect Board with the hard line of accountability to SHG and Executive Council or a special purpose committee established for the oversight and performance management of all its parastatals. I urge you to support this Motion, it is my hope that officials here today will respond positively and tell us that they will review this state-owned entity and take appropriate action to bring about better economies of scale that will yield cheaper unit costs for our utilities so that the consumer can benefit.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this House believes it is in the best interests of St Helena that responsibility for the management of the island's utility services, meaning electricity, water and sewerage, is subject to closer direction and control by the St Helena Government and resolves that an urgent assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of such an action should be undertaken to inform appropriate action. I would urge all Honourable Members to support this important Motion. I beg to move and thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Members, the Motion that's on the table.... Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

I wish to second.

The Speaker –

Oh, sorry, okay. The Motion that's on the table, it doesn't need this time. The Motion that's on the table is that this House believes it is in the best interests of St Helena that responsibility for the management of the island's utility services, meaning electricity, water and sewerage, is subject to closer direction and control by the St Helena Government and resolves that an urgent assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of such an action should be undertaken to inform appropriate action. The Motion is now open to debate. The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I wish to preface what I'm going to say to make it clear from the outset that my comments are not directed to any specific individuals employed by Connect St Helena or sitting on the Board, but to the institutional structure and parameters within which they operate.

Mr Speaker, this is far from being the first occasion on which other Honourable Members and I have expressed concern within this Honourable House and elsewhere regarding the current organisational arrangements for managing and delivering our utilities. However, sadly, no definitive action has been taken to resolve the issues raised and so the present model has dragged on, although there is growing evidence to suggest that it is sub optimal and potentially detrimental to the social and economic development of St Helena. Further delay in getting to grips with this must be avoided and agreed action is increasingly imperative. The utilities were divested at a point in time when public sector modernisation advisers were driving an outsourcing agenda which it was hoped would improve efficiency and effectiveness of non-core services. The agenda was supported by the Department for International Development and formed one of the strands within the commitments St Helena Government had to make in order for the airport project to be approved. Other commitments included reducing the St Helena Government head count, revising policies and legislation pertaining to immigration and

land and other reforms. With hindsight it is arguable that many aspects of those reforms, which St Helena Government embraced in order to fulfil the British Government's preconditions, were not in the best interests of the people of St Helena and have not achieved the benefits that the British Government anticipated. It is now necessary to take stock of what is and what is not helping St Helena and its people and to ensure, as far as is possible, that appropriate action is taken to avoid perpetuating current problems and also to prevent new ones emerging. Mr Speaker, at the request of the Public Accounts Committee, the St Helena Audit Service conducted a Performance Audit and made sixteen recommendations which have been presented in this Honourable House today regarding the governance of all St Helena Government's State-Controlled Entities. These entities include Connect St Helena. A key weakness, previously raised within this Honourable House, is that there is no political oversight of the utilities company, although its responsibilities include management of St Helena's most vital natural resource, water. The Audit Report confirmed that, and I quote, "SHG does not have legislative provision for the supervision of SCEs, that is State Controlled Entities, by Council Committees on behalf of SHG to ensure proper oversight". It further concludes that there is a, and I quote, "clear absence of policy direction from ExCo through the shareholder to the Board". Furthermore, although the Company is a hundred percent state owned, the official serving on the Board is appointed by name and has the same status as other Board members. To address this, the Audit Report recommends that "SHG should establish a role of Government Director who would sit on each SCE Board to provide strategic oversight and financial leadership on behalf of SHG". These fundamental failings in best practice have the potential to be detrimental to St Helena and must be speedily addressed. I welcome the Audit Report as a major step forward, but suggest that its recommendations to be considered not as a final outcome, but as an important first step in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of current practice in order that a robust and far reaching evidence-based agenda for change can be formulated and implemented as quickly as possible. Mr Speaker, although I seconded the amendment to the Motion it is my firm belief that all options for alternative models must be examined, including that of the utilities returning to direct management by St Helena Government. Mr Speaker, the need for change is becoming increasingly obvious. Current utilities prices are arguably the greatest barrier to achieving the economic development that we are all working so hard to bring about and even more importantly a growing proportion of our population is experiencing fuel poverty, in particular, the elderly and large families with low incomes who are really having to struggle to pay for electricity and water. This situation is unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue. I will not repeat the issues raised by my Honourable Colleague in his excellent exposition, all of which merit serious consideration and indicate clearly some of the key risks and flaws inherent in the present model. However, it was also acknowledged that there are some benefits to having the utilities at arms length. One example that comes to mind is that the British Treasury rules will not allow asset replacement funds to be established by Governments in Overseas Territories receiving grant in aid, but divestment has at least made that possible. Mr Speaker, the current utilities regime has now been in place long enough for a thorough assessment to be carried out as it is crucial to the sustainable development of St Helena going forward that the model in place for the organisational structure, management and delivery of our utilities is in the best interests of the people of this island and is the most economic, efficient and effective required to meet their needs. Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members. I welcome this Motion to this Honourable House as I believe it's in the best interests of St Helena that the responsibility for the management of the island utilities should revert back to the direct control of the St Helena Government under a model that meets the needs of the island at this difficult financial times that the island is experiencing.

The Speaker –

Just on that, you're debating the second Motion, the amended Motion, which does not call for reverting back. The discussion and the debate now is on the amended Motion.

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Alright, thank you, Mr Speaker. I was a member of the Executive Council when such utilities fell under the responsibility of the authorities of the Public Works Committee and the work within the policies and regulations would have political overview within the parameters of the Council and were subjected to close direction control and scrutiny. I was also a member of Council when the divestment of the utilities passed before this Honourable House and in my political opinion at the time was that the whole process was rushed and not everyone involved was up to speed in knowing all the impacts this would have on the island economy as the economy grows. Many members of the wider community did not support the divestment at the time and raised much concern with the elected members as many foresee that the devil was in the detail. Unfortunately, many of these concerns of the public fell on deaf ears of Government. I took the divestment very seriously at the time and took note that many of the concerns raised by myself and the public were not addressed which could have and possibly had serious consequences in the future. Mr Speaker, you will recall that I stood alone and opposed the passage through this Honourable House, seeking support for further public consultation and for elected members to fully understand all the changes that were being endorsed. Unfortunately I did not receive the support of Honourable Members and was outvoted. One major question at the time by the public was why was the divestment not put out to public tender, but approved in the House that the current management of utilities be awarded to the contractor. Maybe, Mr Speaker, if the tendering process had been followed we would not be seeking such approval in this House today. Today history has repeated itself and the need for closer direction and control by the St Helena Government for political oversight appears to be paramount. This, in my opinion, is the missing link, but very essential as St Helena Government diverts millions of taxpayers' money over years and have no political oversight. Mr Speaker, I give my full support to this Motion and recommend that the St Helena Government resolves that an urgent assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of such action should be undertaken to inform appropriation action. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Just so we can get our debates clear, we're not asking, the Motion is not asking to revert back to the direct control of St Helena Government at this stage. This is an amended Motion, which, if it fails, then we'll have to deal with the other Motion, the earlier Motion. So you're debating the amended Motion. Is there anyone else who would like to speak, please? Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise in support of the Motion, Mr Speaker. I do believe that an assessment in some form should be carried out on Connect St Helena. It is well and truly known of the dangers of monopoly can pose in an environment if it is not properly regulated and such case as now become evident. I'd just like to read, Mr Speaker, a few

recommendations from the Auditor's Report on the corporate governance of St Helena Government's Group Entities. "There is for improvement – No. 4 – SHG does not exercise its ownership rights through a centralised single ownership entity or by a co-ordinating body consist of skilled, experienced and competent members. Point 5. SHG does not have an ownership policy or a coherent strategy for all of its State Controlled Entities. Point 6. There is no financial oversight of the State Controlled Entities in the form of a group Finance Director role. Point 7. St Helena Line has not held an annual general meeting for the past two financial periods as required by its Articles of Association, which means that SHG as beneficial owner has not actively participated in the governance of St Helena Line. Point 8. SHG does not have a documented Board nomination process for its State Controlled Entities. Mr Speaker, the list goes on. It is evident, Mr Speaker, that the majority of these points are down to areas that are lacking in capacity. I feel capacity has been the issue for this Government in recent years and I feel it is a direct or indirect result of the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding which saw a substantial amount of SHG employees being made redundant. Mr Speaker, I'm not going to repeat what the Honourable Lawson Henry has already stated and been subsequently seconded by Dr Essex, but one point I will pick up on is the issue around economies of scale and the idea around you use more you pay more. Shouldn't it be you use more you pay less. This basic economic principle, Mr Speaker, I feel has mislead St Helena for years. Not only out of desperation to recuperate revenue, Mr Speaker, but I feel this basic economic principle should at least be reinstated to ensure correct financial management of SHG. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there any other Honourable Member who wish to speak to the Motion. The Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, the high utility costs impacts heavily on everything on the island from commercial operations to the running of the family home. I am concerned that the new formed Company with a complement of skilled workers, outsource work that should be done by the Company, at considerable extra expense. Despite the fact that Connect St Helena is public funded the mechanism to question activities of the Company is through the Regulator. Surely this is inconsistent to St Helena Government procedures when all St Helena Government Directorates are subject to political scrutiny. I wholeheartedly agree with the Honourable Mover that there has been significant expenditure in all areas of the Company, but where is the return? I urge all members to support this Motion so that an assessment can be undertaken to enable appropriate action, if any, to be undertaken in the best interests of the community. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am pleased that the Honourable Lawson Henry has changed the wording to his Motion to what I feel I can now support and agree to. I could not agree and support his original Motion. This Motion now calls for closer direction and control by SHG and resolves that an urgent assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of such an action should be undertaken to inform appropriate action. It does not ask for the utility services – electricity, water and sewerage to revert back to the direct control of SHG. Mr Speaker, if we take our minds back to when these utilities were divested, 1st April 2013, I was part of the

Government at the time and unlike my colleague, the Honourable Brian Isaac, I agreed and supported this course of action, I believed it was the right thing to do. That was a condition which formed part of the Memorandum of Understanding and in order for the funding to be released for our airport St Helena Government was obliged to comply with the activities within the Memorandum of Understanding. If we had objected to that utilities being outsourced it could have, and I suspect it would have, jeopardised the construction of our airport and we all have seen the benefits of the airport to date, especially when it comes to aero medical evacuation, saving people's lives. Mr Speaker, like any activity, there ought to be review periods in. St Helena have seen a reduction, the St Helena Government have seen a reduction, and we must not lose sight of this, in the subsidy since April 2013, we've seen savings of £441k which we have been able to put to other useful areas, such as our Health Service, Education and the benefits system and the Income Related Benefits. It has been said that our utilities was never ready for divestment at that time, due to poor state of the utilities system, under invested over the years, but if the service had remained with SHG that work and activities, infrastructure, still had to be upgraded no matter whose hands it in. The reservoirs hadn't been relined for over thirty years and the Government took, in my view, took the right decision and supported capital funding for the re-linament of our reservoirs, enlargement of reservoirs, replacing and upgrading our water systems, deep water boreholes to support the island in times of need and further development is needed. However, Mr Speaker, with Connect receiving substantial amount of subsidy from SHG there ought to be measures in place to ensure that the funding received are being used to achieve best value for St Helena and its people. The Chief Auditor's Report – State Controlled Entities, which has been laid before us today, St Helena Government has accepted the recommendations as to how the actions can be implemented. This, in my view, Mr Speaker, will provide the framework as to how SHG can have closer direction over the control and management of our utility services. Mr Speaker, the MOU, Memorandum of Understanding was designed to stimulate economic growth to the benefit of St Helena and its people. The activities within the Memorandum of Understanding needs to be reviewed and to see if it's still serving its intended purpose. Some of the major activities are well underway, such as a review on the lands and immigration and will soon be ready for public consultation, so, Mr Speaker, I do support the Motion and will support a review into the services to ensure that we are receiving value for money for the benefit of our people, especially when it comes to electricity prices, we all know the high electricity prices and it has been said that perhaps Connect can do a number of things, so there need to be a review, there need to be proper scrutiny in order to see that we are getting value for money in the service, so I stand in support of the Motion. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Russell Yon?

The Hon. Russell Yon –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the amended Motion. Councillor Henry, along with other members, have expressed concerns over the management of the island's utilities service. I fully support that an urgent assessment be carried out and to inform this House of the appropriate actions required. Connect St Helena has always used operational and ageing utilities for a reason for increasing the utility prices, however, there are areas where Connect has either misspent or overspent that are concerns to the general public. Although this may not be a factor in this process, the large amount of additional labour also increases the large amount of labour costs which has been relayed to the paying customer. An overall review would be welcomed and a positive step in allowing this Government and the public to have an overview of this operation and its foreseeable future.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there..... Honourable Anthony Green?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I can support the Motion. As we know, Connect St Helena is currently set up to provide the utilities, certain utilities to the public, yet it has no degree of public control or influence and I mean political control and influence. My vague recollection is that at the time of setting up Connect St Helena the idea was to package together the operation of the utilities, as mentioned in the Motion, and this was really to put together all the costs, those that are obvious and those that are not easily recognised so that the full cost of such an operation of delivering utilities could be known, it was also my recollection that it was to eventually enable Government to be able to divest itself of this operation. We will also look at having to do a drive towards reducing the footprint of the public sector. It was also envisaged that subsidy would be reduced. It was also, in connection with the subsidy, I think, looking at a six-year period when subsidy would probably be reduced to zero, but although through that transition period there would have been political, would not have been political input I know that some of the subsidies have, sort of, the direct subsidy has been reduced, so the idea was that the three main utility services would be packaged and that was the basic reason why Connect St Helena was established. As I mentioned, I believe the direct subsidy has fallen gradually, but what has happened, in my opinion, is that Connect has built up its operation costs over the years, and perhaps rightly so, but overall the costs to the St Helena Government have not fallen, but have risen. Connect can now set their tariffs to recover all their costs but leave St Helena Government to decide if it wants the public to have reasonably priced utilities, the Government has to come up with a further subsidy. I might have had difficulty had the Motion not mentioned an urgent assessment of advantages and disadvantages of what is proposed in the amended Motion as I think we also need to be very careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water. I support the Motion, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Anthony Green. The Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

I stand to support the amended Motion and I will not keep going over what all my colleagues have already said, I will thank Honourable Lawson and Dr Essex here for their kind words or more forceful words and I remember when Honourable Cyril George asked the Motion in this House to reinstate the Water Authority and it wasn't given much support, so I'm hoping this time that this other Motion gets all the support and will make it better for all the St Helenians on the island. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there any other Honourable Member who would like to speak to the Motion? Honourable Cyril Leo?

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. As Connect enjoys the monopoly as the only utilities provider on the island, many constituents are of the opinion that Connect is primarily operating in self interest and extravagance at the expense of their customers, the consumers. Following divestment, elected members want to now know if Connect is conducting their business operations in the very best interests of the people of St Helena or not. With reference to the Motion, the St

Helena Government must carry out an urgent review and provide the people of St Helena with the facts. As we look to the future, it cannot be over-emphasised at this period in time that the loyal, efficient and reliable operations of the provider of utilities to St Helena will be integral to the successful social and economic development of St Helena. The people of St Helena await the promising advantages and benefits of the Renewable Energy Project and the Submarine Cable Project, the St Helena Government must therefore ensure that the prime providers and operators who will retain the monopoly will conduct their business operations with corporate integrity and in the best interests of St Helena and its people. Mr Speaker, subject to these reasons I support the Motion.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Anthony Green?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Just on a point of information, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Point of information.

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Yes, it just maybe that I may have inadvertently said that the direct subsidy has increased, I intended to say the direct subsidy has decreased, so I do apologise if I, indeed, did say that.

The Speaker –

Okay, thank you, amendment accepted. Any other Honourable Member wish to speak to the Motion, don't want to deprive you of your chance. The Honourable Kylie Hercules?

The Hon. Kylie Hercules –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise in support of this Motion. Currently there is only one utilities provider on island. The provider, Connect St Helena Limited, are a commercially operated company, yet we as SHG does input subsidy with no oversight and no control. In light of the island's ever challenging and changing needs and the limited funding available to address these needs, I strongly believe this Motion is essential to evaluate if there is value for money being achieved. I have read the Corporate Governance of SHG Group Entities Performance Audit. There are recommendations as to structure and oversight of these entities, including the current utilities provider, which my Honourable Friend did mention earlier in his statement. We must ensure that we think about the effects on our people, especially those on lower incomes and this is the reason that I therefore support this Motion today and thank my Honourable Friend for presenting this Motion to the House.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wishes to speak to the Motion? No? Then the Honourable Mover?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'd first of all like to thank my Honourable Colleagues for supporting this Motion. I have to say, however, Mr Speaker, I am greatly disappointed that no official saw fit to address this Motion. I just want to make one point very clear. It's that this Motion was not intended to challenge the decision of a former Government of divesting, I think divestment is the right way to go, but we have to have the right divestment and what this Motion

is asking to do that after all these years that SHG should review it and what is sad is that SHG had no plan to do this. It took an Audit Report to bring this to the forefront and I hope that this will be some lessons learnt in going forward when we create these entities that isnot about the economic development that St Helena need at this critical time. As all the members who spoke to the Motion has identified, what it has done is to brought to the forefront the sheer cost of the utilities, but if the Government had more control over it, then some of the creations of in Connect St Helena could have been less, done with less costs, but we haven't even tried, we just left it, that it is alright to pay 46p a unit for electricity, that is not right, Mr Speaker, and how can we expect our economy to grow? You know, Saints have made huge sacrifices, they made huge sacrifices in support of the huge investment that the British Government made in the airport and where that investment had failed it was Saints who picked up and filled those gaps, but they still had to wait a further eighteen months for air service to actually happen, so it is not that we're not doing our part. You know, what's been imposed on us, as my Honourable Friend, Dr Essex, rightly said, was that the conditions that was imposed on us under the MOU in the very first place has not really benefit the people of St Helena, it is, for me, it has put us back and the other important thing that needs to come out of this is that there needs to be a social impact assessment, because that will be a tool for us to be able to use in going forward, so I thank my Honourable Members for supporting this Motion. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Members, the Motion of the Honourable Lawson Henry is that this House believes it is in the best interests of St Helena that responsibility for the management of the island's utility services, meaning electricity, water and sewerage, is subject to closer direction and control by the St Helena Government and resolves that an urgent assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of such an action should be undertaken to inform appropriate action.

Question on Motion, put and agreed to.

The Motion is carried.

The Speaker –

And Honourable Members, the Motion as it stands on the Order Paper is now depleted. Thank you very much indeed. Next item, please?

Motion No. 4 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this House resolves that consideration should be given to developing an appropriate scheme to assist St Helenian families living overseas who wish to return to work on St Helena.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there a seconder?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –
Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

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

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Mr Speaker, if St Helena is to have a sustainable future it needs the commitment, skills and input of its own people. St Helenians have demonstrated conclusively both their ability to succeed and their willingness to develop and rise to new challenges. This has been shown in a very wide range of fields, from the number of undergraduates achieving first class honours, those rising through the ranks in the British Armed Forces, those obtaining vocational qualifications with merit and distinction via distance learning, those running their own businesses successfully in competitive environments overseas and those who have attained management and leadership positions, both locally and, indeed, in other parts of the world. As St Helena enters the era with air access and new opportunities present themselves, such as the Submarine Fibre Optic Cable Link and significant investment in Renewable Energy, the island needs its skilled and experienced sons and daughters to help ensure that it reaps all of the potential benefits. Similarly, delivery of our Sustainable Economic Development Plan is heavily reliant on increased local production, import substitution and economic diversification. Who is more appropriate to play a leading role in these activities than our own people who have the benefit of in depth local knowledge in addition to the experience and skills they have acquired here or overseas. There are current concerns regarding labour shortages in some areas and it is anticipated that there would be a growing need to bring in expatriate employees to take up positions that there are insufficient suitable Saints willing or available to fill. It is fully accepted that given the small size of St Helena's population it is very likely that some expatriate input will continue to be required, particularly in specialist roles such as Doctors etc, but to achieve sustainability, having more of our own people employed here is likely to be more successful and bring more economic and social benefits in the longer term than a throughput of immigrants. It has been pleasing to see more Saints returning home to work since commencement of the airport project and it is very much hoped that this trend will continue, but there is considerable anecdotal evidence that there are fairly large numbers of Saints currently living offshore who would like to come back and take up employment here, but who would find the cost of relocation difficult if not impossible to meet. This is particularly the case with some residing in Britain who have families and are having to spend a high proportion of their income on accommodation. Mr Speaker, it is well known that many Saints who have been average achievers develop and excel when they have been exposed to living and working in a different environment. These are the people that we need to have on island to move St Helena forward as well as our high flyers whom we are less likely to attract back and retain because the international job market is hungry for their expertise. I am aware that data is being gathered from Saints overseas regarding their intentions about returning to St Helena to work, but it should be borne in mind that the reason for some to state that they are not contemplating returning may be financial and there is likely to be reluctance to divulge this. Mr Speaker, in the 1990s when local unemployment exceeded 20% and we had lost our British citizenship and work opportunities on the Falklands were not fully developed, young Saints were provided with a loan to cover the cost of their travel to Britain to enable them to take up training and work experience placements. This enabled persons to benefit from the scheme instead of remaining here and in some cases losing skills developed at school because of long-term unemployment. It is very pleasing to note that many of the young persons who went for training and work experience, whether self funded or with loan assistance, have returned and are now

in management and leadership positions or employed by Police, Health, Education, etc, so the investment that was made in them has proved to be beneficial to St Helena. I will not, however, pretend that the scheme was flawless as unfortunately some individuals did not make the required repayments and consequently St Helena Government did not recoup all the funding made available, but the risk of this problem occurring if such a scheme was to exist Saints to return to work here would be greatly reduced. Mr Speaker, I'm not suggesting that this scheme is necessarily the best option and I'm fully aware of the financial constraints that St Helena Government is facing, but I contend that serious consideration should be given to developing an appropriate scheme to assist St Helenian families living overseas who wish to return here to work and require such a system. If such a scheme were to include single persons as well so much the better, but relocation is far less costly to an individual. Mr Speaker, if this Motion is carried today I ask that the relevant senior officials, government economist and Community and Social Development Committee will ensure that this proposal is investigated further in the context of addressing the projected labour market shortages and building for the sustainable development of St Helena. Let us remember that our people should be ranked as our most precious natural resource and that investment in them is an investment in St Helena's future. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Members, the Motion, standing in the name of the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex, is this House resolves that consideration should be given to developing an appropriate scheme to assist St Helenian families living overseas who wish to return to work on St Helena. The Motion is now open to debate. The Honourable Brian Isaac?

The Hon. Brian Isaac –

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Motion before this Honourable House which seeks the support to resolve that consideration should be given to developing an appropriate scheme to assist St Helenian families living overseas who wish to return to work on St Helena. Mr Speaker, you will recall that a similar scheme was put in place by the St Helena Government when unemployment was at its peak on the island and financial support was provided to St Helenians wishing to work abroad in the form of a loan, which was paid back once the recipients had settled into their work place. An additional scheme was also put in place to financially assist many young people wishing to join the Armed Forces, which was a success. Today consideration is sought in establishing such a scheme to assist Saints abroad to return home and bring their much needed skills gained over the years back to St Helena. As mentioned, Mr Speaker, many Saints wish to return home, but lack the financial support to do so. Many have their own homes here on the island and will contribute to the economy growth. If such a scheme was established I see the potential to be of great benefit to the skills shortage on the island and could also have a down side but like all schemes they must be carefully managed. I give my full support to this Motion and hope that Members will see the value in supporting it. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there any other Honourable Member who wishes to speak to the Motion? The Honourable Christine Scipio O'Dean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio O'Dean –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, as you're fully aware and as well as listeners, that I am a returning Saint, returned seven years ago and I thank the Honourable Mover for bringing this Motion to the House. I believe it is important for all Saints who want to return and contribute

to St Helena's development should be able to do so. I am, however, mindful of our resource constraints and caution that we must not raise expectations where we're unable to deliver. Mr Speaker, I support this Motion.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak to the Motion? Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

Mr Speaker, I rise in full support of this Motion, I believe it is an essential avenue we have to go down to enable our population to grow and in doing so can generate some meaningful revenue within our economy. Wouldn't it be so nice to have an immigration policy in alignment and in conjunction with this scheme to ensure that we have a suitable, qualified labour force to drive our economic development and that Saints be a part of that move. Mr Speaker, I fully support this Motion.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there any other Honourable Member? The Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise in support of this Motion also and I thank my Honourable Colleague for bringing it to the House today. The Motion is calling for consideration in developing an appropriate scheme to assist St Helenian families living overseas who wish to return to work on St Helena. It's not committing the Government to any financial constraints at this stage, although one would hope that if such a scheme was developed then some low cost loans could be made available to be able to make this possible, but I support it, I suppose I can say, having spent half of my life, working life overseas, that I'm a returning Saint too, but I fully support this Motion, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, I rise to give my support to this Motion. If you look at the construction of our airport, it was there to benefit Saints, the airport is there for the benefit of St Helena and its development and this is one way to try and encourage, we want to encourage Saints back to St Helena. It's calling for consideration to be given, we all know our financial constraints, but I can see if some form of working group was established we don't know what would be the outcome, there are ways and schemes that could be developed which could lend support to what this Motion is asking, so I do give my support to it.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable.... Honourable Tony Green?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I can rise, I will rise in support of the Motion, I accept fully the sentiments behind the Motion and I think that I agree totally that economic development is only going to be truly sustainable through primarily by having that delivered by St Helenians. I do though feel that we need to be absolutely certain of everything that will impact on it, because

it's not just relocating costs, it is, in fact, many other things to be considered, but the fact that it's only seeking for this to be considered, then I trust that all of these considerations will be brought out before any final decision or indication of moving forward is taken, but I do support the Motion. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Kylie Hercules?

The Hon. Kylie Hercules –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I also rise in full support of this Motion, I would like to thank the Honourable Dr Essex for bringing this to the House today. St Helena requires er, St Helena actually has less workforce than is actually required on island at the moment, therefore, attracting St Helenian families back to the island to settle does require such a scheme to be looked into and therefore a develop as appropriate, thus ensuring a smooth transition whereby families will remain, not just return to the island temporarily, but remain long into the future. Empowerment of St Helenians in relation to achieving and taking on leadership and management roles on island would see St Helenians being more in control of their future. Additional youth will see a rise in young adults in employment and being more involved with their future. I therefore support this Motion. Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Members wish to speak to the Motion? Honourable Dr Corinda Essex then would you like to wind up?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. First, I would like to thank my Honourable Colleagues for their support; I would have been very surprised if I hadn't got it because this is such an important issue for St Helena moving forward, so I trust that if this Motion is passed within the next few minutes this will be the first step towards the possibilities of establishing such a scheme actually being examined. As I recognised in my initial exposition, we are facing very great resource constraints. I fully accept the point made by the Honourable Tony Green that it is not just a matter of relocation costs, however, relocation costs are an important factor and when one is looking at the potential of bringing in migrant labour, relocation costs normally have to be met for them, so what I'm asking for does not go beyond what is likely to have to be found for relocation costs for migrants from other nationalities who might be brought in to take up positions on St Helena. I trust very much that Honourable Colleagues will pass this Motion and that we will then be able to try and tackle this issue because it is one that could play a major role in helping to ensure that St Helena has a sustainable future and that our own people get the recognition and the opportunities that they deserve. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Dr Corinda Essex. The Motion, standing in the name of the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex is this House resolves that consideration should be given to developing an appropriate scheme to assist St Helenian families living overseas who wish to return to work on St Helena. I now put the question.

Question on Motion, put and agreed to.

The Motion is carried.

The Speaker –

I propose to give you a ten minute comfort break here at this stage before we go on to the Adjournment Debate, it's rather hot in here so we have a ten minute break please.

Council Suspended.**Council Resumed.**

(Note: Beginning of resumption of meeting lost due to recording fault)

7.**ADJOURNMENT DEBATE**The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

.....Tuna to preserve something for the future of our children and the next generation. Rock fishermen must also be respectful of the ocean and practice catch and release. You cannot keep taking from the ocean and give nothing back.

One topic I would like to confront, Mr Speaker, is the issue of social media and its influence on the general public and comments making its way into this Council. I will assure the public that Facebook doesn't run this Council or this Government, but the comments received by Saints and others overseas have damaging consequences. This is unacceptable at a time when St Helena is opening its doors to the world, so I urge those who are opinionated to come out and visit St Helena, contribute in a positive way and be the change you want to see in the world. Although no-one can go back and make a brand new start anyone can start from now and make a brand new end. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there another Honourable Member who wishes to speak?
The Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this Adjournment Debate and wish to raise the following issues. Mr Speaker, the people of St Helena is grateful to Her Majesty's Government for the investment in our airport and they are pleased that we have had commercial flights since October last year; by all accounts, this is working for us all. Despite some minor teething problems, I believe SA Airlink is doing a great job. I would like to mention that many St Helenians, including our Government, have invested in much needed accommodation on the island in preparation for this air service. Others invested heavily too in the hospitality sector. For reasons beyond our control, our airport was to have opened in April 2016. This, sadly, did not happen. It took a further eighteen months before we could eventually get a commercial air service operational. It is common knowledge that those investors were put on hold during this period which have impacted significantly on their ability to stay afloat. Whilst the air service is doing what is intended, this has been at a much reduced capacity to what the airport business case had envisaged and to which our tourism economy was built. Given the enormous pressures put on these investors over the last eighteen months, I believe this Government and Her Majesty's Government, and, in particular, our partners in DfID, needs to accelerate the decision to agree a second flight. Our people have already taken a risk, so too has this Government. We cannot wait around on statistics on what is happening with the limited service we have. Our people needs to see a return on their investment, therefore, we expect DfID to

honour this as they too needs to take some risks just as the same as our people did and this Government did, therefore I expect an early decision on the second flight to be imminent. It takes a long lead-in time to sell a route service therefore, a decision now will not bring benefits until at least the end of this year. I therefore urge the Government to continue to press our partners in DfID for an early resolution.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have again this year found ourselves having to do a rollover budget. This is because our settlement has not been signed off by Her Majesty's Government. No Government, or, indeed, an Overseas Territory, should find itself in this position. It is not good for business or, indeed, the management of our finances, nor is this good governance. However, for the second consecutive year we have been placed in this position, not by our own doing, I may have. This shows us as weak and does nothing to instil confidence in our economy. We must impress upon HMG the need for a timely settlement and one that allows us a longer lead-in time and a settlement that is projected over a three or five year period. Mr Speaker, one of the fallouts of not having an agreed settlement is we still do not know whether we will get a capital programme this year. This House will be only too aware of the number of major projects that is needed if we are to get the best benefits from the investment in the airport and grow our economy that will eventually bring us off grant in aid, recognising, of course, this is a long-term objective and one that is unlikely to happen at least in my lifetime. The longer these big ticket items go unfunded the higher the contingent liability for SHG. This investment is needed because it supports the investment already made in the airport. Secured funding for such capital investment will likewise bring much needed boost to our economy when it can clearly be seen that we are struggling the effects of many shocks, first Brexit with the devaluation of the pound, the increase in goods imported from South Africa as a result, the loss of EDF, the new freight service without a subsidy and, of course, the airport construction winding down, all these pressures have had a detrimental impact on our economy and on top of this inflation has continued to rise. All these pressures and the impacts they are having is well known to our partners in DfID and it is hoped that the settlement when it is eventually agreed will reflect this.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move and support this Adjournment Debate. Thank you.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, although it may be a cause of embarrassment, before I continue further I wish to pay tribute to the Honourable Chief Secretary who will soon be leaving the island, in particular, for the support he has given to enabling local staff to gain recognition for their skills and abilities through the development of professional cadres, structured succession planning and improved pay structures. I think all in the Honourable House, and, indeed, the listening public, will be aware that this is a topic of great importance to me, because it is of great importance to the future of St Helena and I extend sincere thanks for the progress that has been made in an environment of extremely limited resources and a British Government adverse to public pay awards increases, so a very big thank you on behalf of St Helena.

A key issue that is of concern to constituents is that of enforcement and here I am not talking about enforcement of criminal law, I'm not in any way implying that if someone commits a serious crime, such as burglary, rape, assault or something of that nature, the penalties will not be enforced. I am talking about enforcement at a much lower level than that. This is a very wide and in many instances cross cutting topic, but I believe that improvements can be achieved

with more dialogue, public awareness and collaborative working, both within Government and more widely. We are constantly under pressure to comply with international obligations, bring our legislation in line with international standards and requirements and to make laws and regulations regarding matters of public concern, such as parking, litter, etc, but then struggle to be able to enforce these, which not only gives a bad impression, but potentially exposes St Helena Government to litigation. Enforcement is only truly effective if it is consistent, proportionate and seen to be fair. With the current lack of financial and human resources available, it is difficult to satisfy the public that these criteria are being met and, indeed, there are key areas in which there is basically no enforcement capacity. This does not inspire public confidence. I am sure that my Honourable Colleagues have received as many complaints as I have from drivers who happen to be parked on the double yellow line when a Police Officer was in the vicinity and asked them to move on. The complaints then are that there were other vehicles already parked there, other vehicles that had been there parked for much longer periods and why had nothing been done to bring it to their attention. These kind of complaints reach me just about on a daily basis, not just about double yellows, but about all sorts of other issues. We also have constantly received comments, both from local residents and tourists, such as, “St Helena Government can’t even keep its streets clean”. These sorts of negative criticisms do not do the image of St Helena any good and, indeed, I think they feed into some of the derogatory comments in social media and in other places as well. If we want public perceptions to improve and for our legislation to achieve its aims, we must ensure that we build the capacity for proper enforcement. To pass laws, regulations and rules, which we cannot enforce, is counterproductive and brings St Helena Government into disrepute. There are already areas in which lack of resources is seriously impeding enforcement and which need to be addressed before there is serious consequences. Enforcement is primarily not a policy matter and therefore not within the remit of elected members, but, Mr Speaker, it is no good having the policies and the legislation to support these if the wheels come off at the level of enforcement. Mr Speaker, it is essential that all Directorates examine all the enforcement requirements within the legislation contained in their portfolios as part of the next budget round and also identify what else can be done to make enforcement more efficient and effective without throwing more money at it. Please let us not bury our heads in the sand and hope that this problem will go away, because it will not and a responsible Government needs to tackle it sooner rather than later.

Mr Speaker, on another issue, I’ve given a previous undertaking in this House that I will refer to the amount of time that it takes to reach decisions and implement these in every sitting of this Honourable House until I am satisfied that the time spans have been substantially improved. I am sorry to say that I once again have to be like a scratchy old record, because I’m not satisfied that the timeliness of decisions and their implementation has really seen any significant progress. I am fully aware that this is largely attributable to limited resources which are to a great extent beyond our control, also in some places misdirection and in some cases the lack of will to actually move forward and implement change, but the net result is that the public continues to be frustrated and disappointed and I personally find extremely frustrating and disappointing as well. It does nothing whatever for my job satisfaction as an elected representative of the people and I’m sure it does even less for the people who are actually being affected by the lack of decisions and outputs and outcomes. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Anthony Green?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I support the Adjournment, I just have three very short comments and I'll start with that really Council is always seeking ways of trying to improve the communications with the electorate and as many will have seen that I intend to start constituency surgeries from 4th April, Wednesday, 4th April at Kingshurst from 4 to 5.50 pm, but political surgeries are quite different to constituency meetings. Constituency meetings are where Councillors hold meetings that are open to many people at the same time. A surgery provides an opportunity for one to one meetings between a constituent and a Councillor. It's a chance to raise issues of concern; it's also simply an opportunity just to discuss matters generally. Think of it like going to a Doctor and having a private one to one chat. Matters raised at these surgeries will usually be confidential unless agreed otherwise. One other Councillor may possibly be in attendance with me at Kingshurst, that's every first and third Wednesday and I understand that Councillor Russell Yon has indicated his wish to be part of this as and when opportunity permits. This will help to ensure that where one Councillor finds they have another commitment that the show will go on. The overall aim is to increase opportunities for a constituent to have access to Councillors. I really am grateful to the Committee of the Kingshurst Community Centre for their support and cooperation enabling me to get this off the ground.

Separate to this, I remind listeners that another round of constituency meetings start next month and details of dates and times and venues are being published.

On a different note, and I don't know about you, but I'm feeling St Helena has moved into a critical phase. In one sense the future is bright and rosy, but at the same time we've probably never had so many challenges, unknowns and trying to get a lot out of very limited resources. We may now have less people than many years ago, but needs are now more diverse and more complex than before and one solution will no longer fix all. As it says on the Lyle's Golden Syrup tin, out of the strong came forth sweetness, so we St Helenians need to be strong, we need to kill that Lion that Samson referred to so that from our destruction of those threats, the Lion, we can be faced with something that is lined with honey. This can be achieved by working together, but we have a tough time ahead and unity is the key. Working together by everybody on the island for a bright future is going to be tough and right now very necessary. Finally, Mr Speaker, just to add to the blushing, I too would like to pay tribute to the Chief Secretary and wish him well for the future. Mr Speaker, I support the Adjournment.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Cyril Leo?

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I considered asking Councillor Russell Yon, Chairman of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee following in Council today, is he fully aware of the level of frustrations within our community because of the shortage of social housing, is he aware that St Helenians here and overseas want to start building their own homes, but they are unable to obtain land to build on St Helena, is he aware that the failure of the St Helena Government to give more urgent priority to the provision of land and housing is having a negative impact on our community, both socially and economically; and finally, my question would have been, what is he doing about it. As a member of the ENR Committee, I wanted to ask those questions, not because I don't know the answers, but to allow our Chairman to inform the wider public of just how much the Committee wants to make progress with the provision of land and housing and why it is so frustrating for the Committee because it is virtually impossible for this sector to make any substantial progress on behalf of the people of St Helena. Land. The review of the Land Planning and Development Policy is still ongoing with the Working Group. I am told that once again the draft document is completed, the draft will

proceed to the ENR Committee, then through informal LegCo and then on to ExCo for endorsement before progressing to the public consultation stage. All of this urgent work, Mr Speaker, requires sustained effort and momentum from all involved at every stage.

Housing. At various locations throughout the island some land has already been identified for housing. In lower Half Tree Hollow a considerable size area has already been extensively prepared for the construction of homes. Making further has become virtually impossible as a result of the current sewerage infrastructure capacity to handle additional sewage. We have a serious sewerage problem in Jamestown and we have a similar problem with the current sewerage facility at Ladder Hill. In moving forward, addressing the sewerage problems will require urgent attention by all the relevant St Helena Government sectors, but this will be of no consolation to the seventy families who desperately require social housing now and the fifty families seeking affordable housing now. However, it may be of some consolation if I mention that Councillor Russell Yon has already put forward some proposals that will enable some house construction to take place in lower Half Tree Hollow and at Bottom Woods as work is ongoing for upgrading the sewerage infrastructure. It is paramount importance that the upgrade to the sewerage infrastructure will be capable of serving housing development into the unforeseeable future.

A few weeks ago, Connect presented elected members with options for upgrading the sewerage infrastructure for Jamestown and Half Tree Hollow. Deciding on the very best, long-term solution to the sewerage problem, obtaining the necessary funding and putting in place the infrastructure and equipment is going to be a very lengthy and somewhat challenging process. Therefore, the various sectors and individuals within the St Helena Government responsible for making progress must apply more urgency and headway. The current level and pace of change for addressing the overall social and economic needs of the people of St Helena are just not acceptable.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Adjournment Debate and like my colleagues I would like to pay tribute to our Chief Secretary, he has been of tremendous support to this Government in trying circumstances, difficult circumstances and I have to agree with what the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex has said, he's been the driving force behind succession planning and competency based pay and we can see some of the fruit today from that, so I wish him and his family the very best for the future.

Mr Speaker, on Tuesday of this week, Executive Council approved an increase in the Minimum Wage by 10%, but we all know, 10 pence, the Minimum Wage by 10 pence, I beg your pardon, not 10%, 10 pence, but we all know, Mr Speaker, the prices of certain essential goods in the shops are increasing tremendously, not just by one or two pence, but much greater and it will only get worse. We rely on importing the majority of our goods essentially from Cape Town, we need to be exploring other ports and I am pleased to have heard from Andrew Weir Shipping when they recently visited St Helena that they are keen to look at calls from Walvis Bay, an area where Enterprise St Helena is exploring and investigating and I do feel this should be given priority in terms of going forward, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, as a Government, I will ask that the Employment Rights Committee be tasked at an early stage to carry out a comprehensive review on the average income people should be receiving without falling into relative poverty areas. This will mean reaching out to the poorest and lowest paid people in our community. Such work needs to commence as soon as possible

in order for the Government to be best informed with the evidence when negotiating our next budget aid settlement.

Mr Speaker, I will talk about eggs and young chicks. There is sheer frustration out in the community when we have established Enterprise St Helena, don't get me wrong, they are doing a wonderful job in supporting businesses, but the island has been short of eggs for a number of months and it is just not possible, my understanding is, for people to purchase young chicks. I mean, surely, Mr Speaker, this is an area where we should be self sufficient and I will ask the Chairman of Economic Development Committee if he would work with ENRD, Enterprise St Helena and possibly the current suppliers in trying to address this issue in terms of going forward.

Mr Speaker, I will also provide an update on the Immigration review that is well underway, work is progressing and it is hoped that the Group will be in a position to present their findings to members of Legislative Council in May with a view of then going out to engage public consultation. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there any other Honourable Member wishing to speak to the Adjournment Debate? No other Members wish to speak to the Adjournment, oh, Honourable Russell Yon?

The Hon. Russell Yon –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise in support of the Adjournment Debate and also for allowing me to have a few minutes to address this House. The recent decision by DfID, our paymasters, to defer our budget has put a huge amount of strain on this Government and the people of this island. I know that this is not the first time that this has happened, however, together with the current process of approving a one-year budget is detrimental in this Government's planning in making critical decisions and taking this island forward. The effects of having a rollover budget is felt throughout the island and adding to that without having capital programme budget the effects are even worse. Some of the developments that have happened recently on the island, that is, the construction of the airport, the jetty at Ruperts, has affected our island and its people to the effect as if they were born again, not being used to the immediate changes. The demand on all of this to us is to get it right it seems and this seems to be escalating by the seconds. The pressure to provide what is best for our people is mounting every day and our men, women and children is suffering because they are asked to cope with the little we can offer. By the time they receive their offerings we, as a Government, is holding our hands out like beggars to take it back. What a vicious circle we live in. The rising cost of everything we need to support our everyday living has not stopped yet and the added pressure of even more increases on our pockets will make it even worse. It is no wonder that many of our Saints still want to leave the island and many of them already overseas don't want to return, who can blame them? The decisions made today have negative impacts on the majority, especially if they are not informed correctly and leave the impression that we, as members of Legislative Council, don't care, don't know what we are doing. The recent decisions some members of LegCo and ExCo took to approve the request from Connect for full planning permission to construct a sewerage system that will incorporate the area of Half Tree Hollow with Jamestown by means of constructing a pipeline on the outside of Jacob's Ladder to bring nutrient enriched effluent water into Jamestown and connect with that system before the semi-treated water is pumped some 500 metres offshore and 25 metres of deep before being dispersed under pressure into our ocean is one such decision that has grabbed international headlines already, simply because the Ladder is seen as one of the structural wonders of St Helena's rich history and also because the relevant information is not placed out there in time for the public to consume, so

speculations are made. Others do see it for the sentimental reason also. As for myself, being Chair of ENRC, I had to make a decision that I saw fit so that it would fit into St Helena's budget, to be cost effective to the consumer, but most of all, whatever way I placed my vote within the Directorate I would have had eyes glaring at me. From the developing infrastructure and housing to the Environmental and Marine Section and those, finally, who love our historical monuments and buildings, they all come under the one umbrella and I am the one holding the umbrella over their heads. They too must be wondering how on earth I could have made that decision. Tough, but it had to be done. A typical day of being a politician, but I also proposed other solutions that I thought could work, but I was too late for the drawing board and beyond the reach of the St Helena Government budget, I was told. However, we must learn that if we cannot allow our past to marry with our future we will not develop our island. We only have so much space for new developments to embrace efficiently, effectively and under the financial constraints we find ourselves in. It's a shame that decisions like these are making and breaking relationships and friendships and this is also the case on the question I had today from Councillor Thomas. The boat shed had been a part of the everyday boat owner's life on the island where they carried out their boat repairs, stored their boats ready for repairs or stored their working tools. Because this facility wasn't effectively being used it was taken away. In doing so, it broke the trust that some had within the Government and for others they are now ecstatic that they now have a facility that they can use to progress their business. However, in the process, friendships are again broken by the decisions that are made by SHG officials. I hope that in moving forward officials, designers, consultants and engineers will sit and think hard of their proposals and bring members of Legislative Council or other stakeholders to the table earlier so that consultations can take place prior to having Legislative members make decisions that they have to live with while most SHG officials, designers, consultants and engineers are hip hopping somewhere else around the world. It's time for everything. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member? The Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this Adjournment Debate. This has been about eight months of finding your feet and learning faster than you can handle. Meeting after meeting, papers being delivered, sometimes not on time, but we still have to discuss these and make the best possible decisions for the island. Rather hard when your back is against the wall and you're trying to plug holes the best you can. As a team of Councillors, there are times of tension within the meeting, but somehow we sit down and we agree with what we perceive to be the best for the island sometimes you just have to go with what is on the table as there are sometimes no options and I know we are answerable to constituents, so that is the hard part, but I will admit we are trying our utmost to look and make the most appropriate decisions for those issues at hand. Unity is strength.

Delivery of outcomes should have been done and been in motion already but yet we still sit with issues. Air Access, for example, we have it and it's useable, but I still feel strongly about the Cape Town route and the flight should be more looked at arriving Wednesday or Thursday and not just a Saturday. I feel this will give a tourist, and Saints alike, benefits as well as the private sector more beneficial and the increase in spend on the island. We need more money coming and being spent on island. Is this the solution or should we be looking at two flights to offer more convenience of travel, be it three day, four day, seven day or ten day trips to see this magical island. I suppose in my mind I still have the RMS and air working hand in hand

and probably attracting more cruise ships and increasing that market and spend on island. We have air service and so far there are some grey areas that we are working on, but one being the travel from St Helena to Cape Town as our present service just presently goes to Jo'burg as it seems data has shown that most passengers are coming from Johannesburg to St Helena, but nonetheless people of St Helena want to fly to Cape Town and we see how best overcome this and engage the people in getting the best outcomes for them. Less words, more actions and just a feeling that the people of St Helena's concerns are being addressed and the best possible solutions of trying to obtain the least negative implications to the lives of the people on the island as decisions that are made will have implications, not only now, but for the future generations. Again, these words are important and when we discuss and have to make decisions with officials it is not just as easy as it seems with tight budgetary constraints and spends my main focus is creating and making sure my decision includes all people and we manage not to disadvantage anybody. I owe this to constituents and will continue to fight for fair treatment for all. We need to establish a plan whereby we set out where we see the island and projects in the future and stick to a structured strategic plan that is in tune with growth and development of the island's plans and sustainability.

Our financial battling becomes even worse with no capital funding, but again we're at the mercy of the release of funds and at present the industries are battling and, again, there is a constant ask about capital programme funding and no real direct answers are forthcoming. I think this lack of capital funding presently is still and will cause social impacts and we need to make sure we mitigate against this happening and make sure our economy is strong enough to withstand this. We need a capital programme as soon as possible. We need also to establish that we could demonstrate that we spend on project in accordance with an effective and efficient costing structure and be accountable for our spends now and in future projects. We need to demonstrate that we can control and spend wisely and deliver projects within a realistic costing structure. There are Motions that will be discussed, which is looking at the future of St Helena and the development of a sustainable future. There is only one way to look at it, support and get these Motions progressed.

My all good wishes go to the Chief Secretary and his wife as he leaves. Thank you for your support and to the incumbent, Susan O'Bey, I look forward to working with you. I also, finally, would like to wish those competing in the Games, all success and I hope they achieve and enjoy as much success as they possibly can achieve and know that St Helena Island is behind them one hundred percent. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

I stand in support of the Adjournment Debate. I know as a Council we have been working very hard for our people, but the outcomes what we have, what we'd like to have, are not forthcoming. Again this year we don't have a balanced budget and I wonder if, because we got a local Financial Secretary it not coming, I just wondering about that there, but that creates uncertainties, anger, amongst our people and makes everyone nervous and the questions, us, as elected members, us doing the right thing. During the last few days, delivering fish to our community, I've had firsthand experience how people are still suffering from social injustice and I will ask and urge my Honourable Colleagues and officers to stand together and show our partners in DfID that although they have the gold, that when making decisions that impacts on us that the local knowledge are included. After all, it is our island. Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the Honourable Chief Secretary, Roy, thank you for everything my friend, it been fun and I wish you and your wife a successful future. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Is there any other Honourable Member who wishes to speak? No, then would you like to wind up the debate please, Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Roy Burke –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm not very good at making valedictory speeches, so I won't bother. Can I just say from an adjournment debate perspective I'm grateful to Members for their comments, there's not very much in terms of action for me this time, so I'm also grateful for that, but just referring to some of the points that have been made I think we would all identify with the issues that the Honourable Cruyff Buckley raised, many issues that we recognise as being pertinent and crucial, a mini state of the nation report, if you like. We all understand the issues that you raise and I particularly want to identify with the Facebook comments that you raised and I can assure Members that when I get off this island you won't find me commenting on anybody's Facebook page about anything. It's a crucial issue, but it's something that we really need to learn how to use better than we're doing at the moment. Facebook is very powerful, as is all of the social media, I don't think we use it anywhere near to the extent that we should be doing, I'm sure my colleague, Susan O'Bey, will take that forward – there's an action point for you.

The Honourable Lawson Henry mentioned pressures on the local economy and the fact that we need a second flight. We talked about it a little earlier in answer to the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex's questions. It's more than just a little crucial, I think it's an absolute sh..?. and I think we should be thinking now already, not about second flights, but further medical flights and how that's going to be achieved in due course. The very difficult situation that we're in with rollover budget again this year makes life very difficult for my colleague, the local Financial Secretary, who, I have to say, is doing a fabulous job, I don't think he can be blamed for anything in that respect, but taking a longer period of the budget, longer term certainty for the budget is crucial and then fundamentally and perhaps even more important than all of these things is the capital programme which is absent and has been since Christmas and bear in mind that in this last twelve-month period all we've been doing is rollover from the previous capital budget so we're not actually getting any new money invested as far as I can see. A capital programme will help to deal with some of the long term under investment in infrastructure that the island has had and one of the most debilitating aspects of living and working in St Helena. I certainly understand the issues that the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex mentioned in terms of enforcement. We quite often get ourselves in a position where we are introducing legislation, changing regulations with no chance of enforcing whatever those regulations say. It'll be an interesting exercise to work out ways in which we can introduce a more rigorous enforcement policy with the limited budget, because as we all know the best plans that are made or the best battle plans that are made fail at the first contact with the enemy and I think that's what happens quite often here. Another action point for my colleague.

The Honourable Cyril Leo made mention of land and housing and other infrastructure issues and I think it's, we all agree with everything you say, if it was easy to do it would have been done, it's not and it is dependent on significant infrastructure funds through the capital programme. I know there's a lot of work going on in ANRD, particularly in the Committee in that respect and I and I think everybody else is hopeful that we are getting closer to the point where we can actually start to deliver some of that, but we need some money. A fully funded forward programme is key to dealing with those issues.

I'll leave my colleague, the Honourable Financial Secretary to deal with the shipping issues raised by the Honourable Derek Thomas Walvis Bay etc, I'm afraid I'm removed from those issues, but Dax will take those forward as well and I know that the Employment Rights

Committee were listening to your comments, as was the Honourable Lawson Henry when it comes to eggs and chicks.

The Honourable Russell Yon mentioned rollover budget and capital, again, crucial that we get that funding and that we have some more certainty and I hope that any conversations with DfID in the coming weeks will major on those issues, because I think it's crucial.

The Honourable Clint Beard demonstrated just how much hard work it is to be a Councillor and I've always said and said in this House that I don't envy your jobs, I would never volunteer to be a politician, I'd never put myself forward, it's much easier sitting behind the desk that I sit behind than doing what you have to do and I take off my hat to you and I'd also like to associate myself with the comments on the Commonwealth Games team, we wish them every success.

Honourable Members, I'd just like to add my thanks to the staff who work for St Helena Government for all the work they do. My job is easy in many respects, they do all the hard work, particularly the Directors of SHG, there's only a few of them around at the moment, but I think it's fair to say that we've probably got the best team in place that I've seen, Directors, and their support is particularly welcome and you should take full advantage of their capability because some very good people there.

And to the people of St Helena and to the island itself, it's been an honour and a privilege. I would like to wish Susan all the very best of luck in this post in the future. As a remarkable character Muriel Donnelly once said, and I'll tell you later if you don't know her, "there's no such thing as an end, merely a page in the book where you leave the story". Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much indeed. (Applause) Yes, when Chief Secretary was summing up that time and talking it reminded me to say to you, here's a very difficult task, particularly in this forum like this, which is public, because he deals with the Adjournment Debates and he doesn't get a ten clear days notice to be able to get his Motions and responses right, he has to deal with it straight away. You did extremely well, Roy, and we're certainly going to miss you.

Council, the Motion now is that this Council does adjourn sine die.

Question on Motion, put and agreed to.

Council adjourned sine die.



