

**Open Minutes of the Social and Community Development Committee Meeting held on  
Wednesday, 18 March 2020 at 11 am in the Council Chamber**

<b><u>Present:</u></b>	<b>Chairman:</b>	Hon Anthony Green, Chairman (Hon TG)
	<b>Deputy Chairman:</b>	Hon Cyril Leo (Hon CL)
	<b>Members:</b>	Hon Derek Thomas (Hon DT) Hon Jeffrey Ellick (Hon JE)
	<b>Non-Voting Member:</b>	Mrs Gillian Francis, Deputy Chief Secretary (GF)
	<b>Secretary:</b>	Mrs Nicole Plato, Executive Assistant, Corporate Services (NP)
	<b>Invited:</b>	Mr Nicholas Yon, Deputy Financial Secretary (NY) – <i>for item 1 only</i> Mr Neil Fantom, Statistician (NF) – <i>for item 1 only</i> Miss Justine Joshua, Senior Statistics Assistant (JJ) – <i>for item 1 only</i> Mrs Catherine Turner, CEO/Commissioner EHR Commission – <i>for items 2-3 only</i>
	<b>Apologies:</b>	Hon Gavin Ellick (Hon GE) Mrs Tracy Poole-Nandy, Director of Children & Adults Social Care (TPN) – non-voting member

Hon TG welcomed all to the meeting.

**1. Uplift in the Minimum Income Standard (MIS)**

Hon TG welcomed NY, NF, JJ and a member of the media to the meeting.

NY said that the process was agreed some time ago by ExCo for an uplift in the MIS to be held on a six monthly basis instead of annually. The price collection for the MIS basket was undertaken between January and February of this year which determines the MIS for St Helena. Rates for BIP and IRB are then applied based on this.

The increase from 1 April in the Connect St Helena water Tariffs has been factored into the MIS this time round rather than picking it up later. There is currently 178 households on Island that receive IRB and 783 individuals are in receipt of BIP. Based on the number for a proposed uplift this will cost an additional £13k per annum to SHG. The proposed 5% uplift in the budget for next year is based on the estimate of people to come on to IRB and BIP as well as taking into account potential price increases. The £13k is sufficiently covered in the budget for this MIS uplift.

NY said that the MIS increases the IRB and BIP rates by 30p which means that IRB is increased to £71.80 and BIP to £74.30 which is an increase of 2.4% overall.

NF advised that there are always questions over methodology from the media and the general public and as a result the Statistics office published a methodology leaflet in November 2019 and NF tabled it for Members which they found to be very helpful. NF advised that 21 outlets across the island are used for the price collection using the cheapest items on the shelf.

NF said that this particular price collection was challenging due to the increase in the water tariffs despite it being effective from 1 April. The supply of some commodities has been difficult as well. Fish is a key item and the issues around sale of fish in January and the beginning of February contributed to the difficulty in obtaining a definitive price for Fish during this time; stable prices for potatoes, eggs and bananas were also difficult to obtain but for these items the basket saw a decrease in price. The inflation rate is currently also very low at 2.1%.

249 items were more expensive this time with 218 items less expensive therefore overall it balanced out.

Comments and questions from Members were as follows:

- Was the expected increase in freight also factored in? *NF said they use the price that the consumer pays in the end when doing the MIS. The exchange rates from the Bank of England is used as opposed to the local exchange rate from retailers.*
- Looking at the figures, is there any contingency, looking at how the island is going with people buying more soap and hand sanitisers due to Covid19 preparedness and some retailers selling these products for expensive prices? *NF said that these prices were from Jan/Feb and are not the current prices. NY said that they could look at including something that takes into account recent events.*
- Is the decrease in prices related to sell by dates or competition of retailers? *NF said they do not include in the price collection goods that are out of date but would look at those that are near to the sell by date which are reduced at times but the MIS does include the lowest competitive price.*
- Some people might not be able to physically get to the other shop that sells the product for a lower price because of their situation, therefore we would always be leaving someone behind. It would be best to use the highest price for the MIS methodology.
- Given the current financial economic climate, it is very embarrassing to approve a 30p increase as this is not a good message we are sending to the public. The 30p increase does not seem to cover costs for the increase in the water tariffs and other increases. We are encouraging people to live healthier but the price of vegetables are too high for the poor person to afford.
- The MIS basket was last set in 2013 when the MIS was introduced therefore it might be timely to review the basket. *NF said that two years ago the Dietician reviewed the food part of the basket and St Helenarised it. A consultation process was also carried out on the basket in 2013. We could review the basket but this would not change the price increase if the prices does not change within the period of the price collection.*
- The overall message to the public will be that politicians are not in tune with reality so we perhaps need to change the basket.
- Some of the concerns mentioned will be picked up as part of the social security review and there will be recommendations in terms of transport etc.

Hon DT left the meeting.

SCDC agreed the increase in the MIS by 30p in line with the current policy thereby increasing the IRB to £71.80 and BIP to £74.30. The subsequent Social Security (Amendment) Regulations were agreed for onward transmission to ExCo for endorsement to come into force from April 2020.

**(Action: NY)**

Members noted that the MIS basket had not changed since 2013 (7 years) and therefore felt that it is timely for a review of the basket. NP to place this on a future meeting agenda.

**(Action: NP)**

## **2. Equality/Disability Legislation**

CT was welcomed to the meeting. This matter had been brought to the Committee last October where the AG's Chambers advice was to see if there were any deficits in existing legislation and look at where changes could be made as oppose to introducing a new piece of legislation. Since this, CT said that she had come across a number of other documentation regarding this and feel that it is best to have one piece of legislation and as such CT re-tabled the original legislation proposal i.e. to have one piece of legislation that covers equality and promotion of access for people with disabilities. CT said that rather than having so many aspects to this spread across legislation which would be very piece meal, it would be good to have it all in

one piece of legislation. The list of what is needed is included in the proposal and it came from the Bermuda legislation. Not having a sole piece of legislation for equality/disability might meet local requirements but not international e.g. CEDAW etc.

CT advised that other OT's also have similar legislation in place e.g. Gibraltar and Bermuda who has a Human Rights act and constitution and Turks and Caicos has elements included in their constitution which allows private issues to be dealt with.

Members agreed that this should be taken forward to see if one piece of overarching legislation should be implemented that covers equality and disability.

Hon TG therefore agreed to write to the Attorney General with the previous proposal submitted to SCDC and reattach the recent letter from CT for legal advice from the AG's Chambers on this matter before a decision is taken at the next SCDC meeting. NP to place this on the next SCDC meeting agenda.

**(Action: Hon TG/NP)**

Hon DT returned to the meeting.

### **3. Equality & Human Rights Framework Agreement**

GF advised that the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) had met with the previous Governor and Elected Members of ExCo last year and agreed that a framework agreement should be implemented to agree the working relationship between SHG and the EHRC together with respective responsibilities and as a result GF worked with the EHRC Commission and also took into account the views from the AG's Chambers. The agreement is based on the Equality and Human Rights Ordinance, 2015 and the Paris and Belgrade Principles and draws on the format of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Framework document.

CT said that this document had been worked on for a year and thanked GF and the Deputy FS and others who had been involved in compiling the framework agreement. A clear steer was needed on what the EHRC had to achieve on behalf of SHG and what services they need to offer SHG; this would be clear guidelines for the EHRC Commission. GF confirmed that the framework has been agreed by SHG and the EHRC Commission.

The agreement will be reviewed every 3 years.

CT reviewed the agreement with the committee.

Members were happy to see that the SHG job evaluation process would be used for appointing the CEO of the EHRC and this would extend to all staff of the EHRC.

Hon TG expressed his thanks on behalf of the Committee to GF, CT and others who had helped to compile the Framework Agreement.

SCDC agreed the draft Framework Agreement between SHG and the EHRC to be submitted to ExCo for approval.

**(Action: GF)**

Under the FW agreement, NP to ensure that the EHRC are copied in on the open agenda for SCDC meetings to see if they need to input on any of the items. As is the case currently, CT will continue to be invited for any item under the closed session where necessary.

**(Action: NP)**

To ensure regular updates from the EHRC are given to SCDC.

**(Action: CT/NP)**

### **4. Elections Sub-Committee update**

Hon TG reported that he had written to the Attorney General (AG) to nominate a representative from the AG's Chambers to sit on the Sub-Committee to review the Elections Ordinance and was waiting on a response.

Comments from Members at the last meeting had been incorporated in the final draft TORs for the Sub-Committee and therefore SCDC agreed the TORs and also felt that the timeframe should be adjusted by the sub-committee to be four months from now i.e. July 2020.

Hon TG agreed to:

- remind AG to advise on a representative to sit on this sub-committee;
- to request HE's approval of the AG's rep and the Returning officer to sit on the sub-committee; and
- to issue appointment letters to all members of the Sub-committee.

**(Action: Hon TG)**

## **5. Confirmation of the Open minutes from the meeting held on 12 February 2020**

The open minutes of the meeting held on 12 February was confirmed.

## **6. Matters Arising**

### **6.1 Information Bill**

GF still awaits the advisory note from the Attorney General and will share it with SCDC upon receipt.

**(Action: GF)**

### **6.2 Immigration Ordinance Review**

Hon DT reported that the draft Policy was in the process of being finalised and will be shared with the committee soon.

To make efficient use of Members time, the Committee agreed that they were happy for one presentation to be given to all Councillors on the policy and following this the policy can be endorsed by SCDC. The policy should at least be sent to Councillors one week in advance of the meeting so that they have sufficient time to read and digest the information.

NP to KIV the Immigration Ordinance Review and draft Policy for Committee endorsement after it has been discussed with all Councillors/Officials for their buy-in/comments.

**(Action: Hon DT/TG/NP)**

### **6.3 Occasional Liquor Licence**

Hon DT was reminded to send NP his amendment to include with the amendment that Hon TG submitted. NP to KIV and process through the AG's Chambers.

**(Action: Hon DT/Hon TG/ NP)**

## **7. AOB**

### **7.1 Social Distancing – Format of Meetings**

Hon JE wondered whether having open meetings to the public was sending the wrong message given social distancing amidst Covid19 preparation. We could Skype people in for certain items instead of inviting them physically to meetings however the costs would have to be taken into account.

On behalf of Hon JE, NP to ask the Secretary to EMs to place on Friday's agenda 'Format of future Council meetings' in the interest of social distancing etc.

**(Action: NP)**

7.2 Food Security

Hon JE raised the issue of food security with the Ship being further delayed until end of March and the effect this will have on the community, in particular the vulnerable. Hon JE as a member of the Incident Executive Group (IEG) to keep this in view.

**(Action: Hon JE)**

There being no further business, the open meeting closed.

Minutes Approved



Chairman

Date: 15 April 2020