

Minutes of the Meeting of Executive Council held on Tuesday, 13th October 2020 at 9.30am
in the Council Chamber

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

In attendance: Clerk of Councils (Mrs C C Johnson)
Head of Corporate Support (Mrs C A George)
Head of News (Mrs K Yon)
Deputy Financial Secretary (Mr N A Yon)
Economic Development and Prosperity Advisor (Mr Karan Garcha)
Senior Press Officer (Mr Liam Yon)

Apologies: The Hon Financial Secretary (Mr D L Richards)

OPEN SESSION

88.1 Welcome

The Governor welcomed all to the meeting and noted the large audience in the Chamber.

88.2 Trans-Atlantic Slave Memorial (ExCo Memo 69/2020)

The Chair of the Liberated African Advisory Committee (LAAC), Mrs Helena Bennett, was in attendance for this item of business.

The Chief Secretary introduced the Memorandum and explained SHG's commitment to supporting the reinternment of the 325 intact human remains unearthed during the construction of the Island's airport in 2008 as per the mitigation planned under the Environmental Statement for the Airport Project.

The Chief Secretary advised that in 2018 the Liberated African Advisory Committee presented a report to Executive Council on 'Options for the Reinternment of the Excavated Liberated African Remains' with 6 key recommendations which were endorsed by Executive Council. Following this, funding was provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to assist in the development of a Master Plan. The project recommended a three phase approach, as follows:-

- 1) The immediate term - would focus on the reburials of the remains that were excavated in 2008
- 2) The short to medium term - focusing on education, interpretation and raising awareness of the Island's cultural resources
- 3) The medium to long term - concentrating on the creation of a Memorial.

The Chief Secretary emphasised that Executive Council was not being asked to provide advice on any of the costs set out in the Memorandum, rather to advise the direction of travel as set out in the 'Trans-Atlantic Slave Memorial – St Helena Master Plan'. However it was noted that SHG would be responsible for the costs associated with reburial of the remains.

Members were content to give their support but voiced strong opinions that the magnitude and gravity for this project should not be underestimated because of the opportunities it would present for international recognition. The Liberated Africans history was of great significance not just for local and British history but also international history.

During discussion, some concerns were raised about possible negative financial implications for the Education and Employment Directorate of expanding the curriculum, as well as the matter of the land situation in Rupert's and wanted to be assured that sufficient suitable land had been set aside for industrial development; the Chief Secretary confirmed that the group had liaised with the relevant officers in Planning. In response to a question regarding the time frame of the Master Plan implementation, the Chair of the LAAC explained that the phases could be taken forward concurrently but the Memorialisation would need to be undertaken lastly due to the significant amount of funding that would be required.

The Governor also asked for clarity on the development of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Route and Liberated African Establishment product for market; the Chair of the LAAC explained that the Africa diaspora was a large market and many tourists travel to ancestral places for historical reasons so having St Helena on this route will be really valuable because there would be a focus on research, funding, marketing and advertising so the benefits to St Helena of being the "middle passage" was vital.

The Chief Secretary thanked the advisory group for all the hard work they had done and this was reiterated by HE the Governor and the Executive Council Members.

Following discussion, Council advised and the Governor agreed, that the Trans-Atlantic Slave Memorial – St Helena, Master Plan should be ratified for adoption and the 5 recommendations proposed in the Master Plan and as set out in the Memorandum should be agreed, noting that more work was required on the financial aspects of the Master Plan and that land use would be subject to planning and land disposal policies. The wish to build on the existing curriculum in Island schools was also expressed and the development of the Tourism aspect of the Master plan welcomed.

(Action: Hon Chief Secretary/Clerk of Councils)

The Governor thanked the Chair of the Liberated African Advisory Committee for her input and at this point she left the meeting.

88.3 St Helena Commercial Fishermen's Association Petition (ExCo Memo 70/2020)

The Chairman of the Economic Development Committee introduced the Memorandum asking Council:

- a) To consider the Petition from the St Helena Commercial Fishermen's Association entitled "Fishing is Everybody's Business" Annex A and Annex B;
- b) To consider the Advice Note and options to respond to the Petition attached in Annex C and recommendation from the Economic Development Committee;
- c) To advise on the response to the Petition.

The Chairman of the Economic Development Committee elaborated in detail on the background and considerations, the various options available, financial implications, economic implications, consistency with investment policy principles and the public reaction.

Members noted that the Petition was considered at the Economic Development Committee (EDC) meeting held on 24 September 2020.

The Chairman of the Economic Development Committee established that it would be helpful if the officers could explain from a SHG perspective on the Petition requests which were:

- a. Conflicts of interests;
- b. Exclusion of local fishers;
- c. Threats to our food security;
- d. Lack of openness & transparency;
- e. Non-science based decision making;
- f. Potential violations of Human Rights;
- g. By 'invite only' commercial venture; and
- h. Threats to local livelihoods.

The Chief Secretary advised that no evidence had been provided with the Petition to substantiate the allegations listed above, which was noted by Members.

Members were of the view that Executive Council needed to have a strategic point of view and reflected on the action taken to date to support the fishing sector and take it forward without the need to continually subsidise the industry. Whilst the 1191 Petition signatures could not be ignored Members echoed the need to make strategic decisions and to see the opportunities associated with inward investment. The suggestion of either the Internal Audit Service or the St Helena Audit Service looking into the process that has been followed in arriving at potential overseas investment in the Fishing sector was put forward.

Members noted the amount of work that the organisers had put into collecting signatures for the Petition.

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

- (a) The request outlined in the Petition should not be agreed;
- (b) The investment proposal led by PQ Trading should continue and both parties should work together to make the investment work for the benefit of the Island;
- (c) The Petition and the view it represented should be acknowledged, as well as acknowledging the fact that others disagreed with that view; this response to come from all Elected Members and should include a request to ask for any evidence of the allegations set out in the petition; and
- (d) Audit arrangements would be determined.

(Action: Hon Chief Secretary/Hon Chairman EDC/Clerk of Councils)

88.4 Confirmation of Open Session Minutes of 29 September 2020

The minutes of the open session of the 29th September 2020 were confirmed.

88.5 Matters Arising from the Open Session Minutes

There were no Matters Arising from the Open Minutes.

88.6 Any Other Business

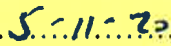
88.6.1 MV Helena

The Hon Cruyff Buckley asked why, following the announcement that a person on board the MV Helena was presenting with 'flu like symptoms, the vessel did not follow procedures and berth in the designated area for vessels under quarantine. The Chief Secretary advised that the ship remained at anchor until Health personnel were ready to board, when it then came closer for safety reasons, as the PPE may otherwise have become damaged during boarding.


There was no any other business for discussion in Open Session.


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Governor


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Date


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Clerk of Councils
05.11.20