

Minutes of the Meeting of Executive Council held on Tuesday, 17th November 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 Financial Secretary (Mr D L Richards) (from 09.52am)
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)
Head of Governor's Office (Mr Greg Gibson)
Senior Press Officer (Mr Liam Yon)

OPEN SESSION

91.1 Welcome

The Governor welcomed all to the meeting.

91.2 Improvements to the Judicial Building (ExCo Memo 77/2020)

The Chief Planning Officer, Mr Ismail Mohammed, was in attendance for this item of business.

The Chief Secretary reminded Council that they were sitting as the Planning Authority and introduced the Memorandum asking Council to consider and advise whether Full Development Permission should be granted, with Conditions, for the partial demolition and erection of single storey building to provide improved facilities to Judicial Buildings, Grand Parade.

The Chief Secretary added that the Land Development Control Authority (LDCA) discussed this application at their meeting on the 08th October 2020 and no issues were raised but the application had been presented to Council today because the Chief Planning Officer is required to report on all applications for Development permission which are capital programme projects.

The Chief Planning Officer explained all the details of the Planning Officer's Report to Members and elaborated on the new proposed layout which would improve accessibility of the building for all users and in particular make the building wheel chair accessible.

Members were content to give their support and pleased to see that the phases of this project were progressing. During discussion some concerns were raised about the availability of restroom facilities; the Chief Planning Officer advised that these facilities had been improved for the users of the building. Members also questioned the close proximity of the

prosecution and defence offices; the Chief Planning Officer replied that this was not a planning issue but rather an administrative matter

Following discussion, Council advised and the Governor agreed, that Full Development Permission should be granted, with Conditions, for the partial demolition and erection of single storey building to provide improved facilities to Judicial Buildings, Grand Parade.

(Action: Hon Chief Secretary/Clerk of Councils)

91.3 St Helena Tourism Covid-19 Recovery Strategy (ExCo Memo 78/2020)

The Director of Tourism, Mrs Helena Bennett, was in attendance for this item of business.

The Chairman of the Economic Development Committee (EDC) presented the Memorandum asking Executive Council to consider and advise whether the St Helena Tourism COVID-19 Recovery Strategy should be endorsed.

The Chairman of the EDC provided Members with some additional detailed background and Members noted the Strategy had been presented to the EDC on the 22nd October 2020.

The Director of Tourism explained the strategy to Members advising that the Strategy was based on assumptions with the top priorities being marine activities, armchair tourism, walking and hiking.

Members were pleased to note that there was a strategy in place with efforts to maintain St Helena's profile during the current world pandemic. Members supported the initiative of virtual 'armchair' tourism in the short term and were of the view that resources should be directed also on promoting marine activities, as these had a proven track record of success in attracting visitors, with efforts continuing with regard to providing a decompression chamber for divers. The need for local businesses to be encouraged to take the opportunity to enhance their offering at this time was also suggested and the need for continued maintenance of hiking trails was recommended. A question was asked as to whether the possibility of attracting longer-term Tourists in the medium-term who might not be subject to the 14 days quarantine requirement had been considered; the Director of Tourism stated that this had been given some thought, as retirees often enquire about longer stays on the Island.

Following discussion, Council advised and the Governor agreed, that the St Helena Tourism COVID-19 Recovery Strategy should be endorsed subject to the facilities being maintained and where possible assistance given to hotels so that they are also well prepared for the future.

(Action: Hon Chairman EDC/Clerk of Councils)

The Governor thanked the Director of Tourism for her input and at this point she left the meeting.

91.4 First Supplementary Appropriation (2020/21) Bill 2020 (ExCo Memo 79/2020)

The Financial Secretary presented the Memorandum asking Council to consider and advise whether the First Supplementary Appropriation (2020/21) Bill 2020 should be printed, published and presented as Government Business at the next formal meeting of the Legislative Council which had been deferred to the 11th December 2020.

The Financial Secretary elaborated on the background advising Members that the St Helena Airport Limited (SHAL) had claimed the full allocation of financial aid in 2019/20 and as a result, £0.5 million of the 2019/20 financial aid for airport operations was ring-fenced in the Consolidated Fund for future SHAL capital projects.

SHAL had presented a Business Case to SHG and FCDO seeking approval to fund the procurement of a road sweeper for the airport runway in 2020/21 from the unspent financial aid granted for 2019/20. In September 2020, approval was granted by FCDO to apply the unspent financial aid for airport operations in 2019/20 to the procurement of the runway sweeper. It is estimated that £230,000 would be required for the sweeper, this comprised the indicative purchase cost and included a contingency for any potential difference to the original quotation, freight and other associated costs to bring the asset fully operational.

Members were content to support the proposal recognising that it was fortunate that the funding was not withdrawn but questioned whether as per the procurement regulations, more than one quote had been sought; the Financial Secretary advised that if the request for Supplementary Appropriation was approved he would instruct SHAL that they should seek 3 written quotes for this piece of equipment before proceeding with procurement.

(Action: Hon Financial Secretary)

Members noted that this would be specialist equipment for the Airport but queried if this could be a shared asset; the Financial Secretary replied that this would only be used for SHAL and the areas around the Airport.

Members asked whether SHAL had made a profit during the 2019/20 financial year. The Financial Secretary explained that there was a £200k profit but that included the subsidy payment; he advised that he would ask about projections for this financial year.

(Action: Hon Financial Secretary)

Following discussion, Council advised and the Governor agreed, the First Supplementary Appropriation (2020/21) Bill 2020 should be printed, published and presented as Government Business at the next formal meeting of the Legislative Council on the 11th December 2020.

(Action: Hon Financial Secretary/Clerk of Councils)

91.5 Confirmation of Open Session Minutes of 3 November 2020

The minutes of the open session of the 3rd November 2020 were confirmed.

91.6 Matters Arising from the Open Session Minutes

There were no Matters Arising from the Open Session minutes.

91.7 Any Other Business

91.7.1 Pledge for Nature

The Hon Cruyff Buckley advised that the draft letter responding to the Pledge for Nature to Lord Goldsmith had been circulated to Members; if they accepted the draft,


it would be issued. The Governor expressed the view that if there were any points in Lord Goldsmith's correspondence that were not relevant to St Helena, then that should be made known in Hon Buckley's response. Likewise, the response should not commit St Helena to any actions that would have financial implications for SHG.

The view was expressed that signing up to the Pledge for Nature might open up potential funding sources for the Island.

The Hon Cruyff Buckley was tasked with seeking assistance from the Director of Environment Natural Resources and Planning to finalise the final version of the letter and circulating the final draft to Members for approval.

(Action: Hon Cruyff Buckley)

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


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P.P. Governor
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20.01.21


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Clerk of Councils
20.01.21

Date