

777 Minutes 777 of the Education and Employment Committee Meeting at the Education Learning Centre held on Wednesday, 17 February 2021 at 0900hrs.

Present: Hon. Clint Beard Chairperson
Hon. Miss Christine Scipio Deputy Chairperson
Hon. Dr Corinda Essex Member
Hon Lawson Henry Member
Mrs Wendy Benjamin Director of Education & Employment
Mrs Angela Benjamin Assistant Director Life Long Learning
Miss Kerry Lawrence Assistant Director Schools

Invited Senior Economist For Item 77.2
Finance Officer For Item 77.8
Career Access and Economic Policy Assistant For item 77.5

Apologies: Hon Brian Isaac Member
Miss Santana Fowler Secretary

77.1 WELCOME

The Chairperson welcomed all present to the meeting; a special welcome was extended to the Senior Economist for Item 77.2.

77.2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Assistant Director Schools all declared personal interest as their children are currently enrolled in the education system. This will be noted for subsequent meetings.

77.3 CONFIRMATION AND SIGNING OF MINUTES

The minutes were confirmed as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairperson. Matters arising from the previous meeting were as follows:

77.3.1 In regards to item 76.3.1 the Chairperson has been unable to meet with the Senior Economist and the Career Access and Economic Policy Assistant at this point.

ACTION: Chairperson

77.3.2 Following actions regarding item 76.3.2, a presentation on Career Access St Helena (CASH) was organised (see item 77.5)

77.3.3 The Assistant Director Schools will present to the Committee at the next meeting the requirements to enable students to move from GCSE level to A Level so that this could be communicated to students prior to reaching year 9.

ACTION: Assistant Director, Schools

77.3.4 The compilation of information identifying specific areas where apprenticeships are needed is still to be completed. Current placement areas was circulated.

ACTION: Assistant Director, Lifelong Learning

77.3.5 The Director advised that she is still awaiting confirmation if the MoU has been signed between South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute and the St Helena Research Institute.

ACTION: Director

77.3.6 The Director informed Members that the amendments to the Charging Policy is still to be completed; the revised policy will be presented at the next meeting for approval.

ACTION: Director

77.4 EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS – MINIMUM WAGE

The Senior Economist provided information regarding changes in the approach and process for determining minimum wage, including various factors to consider such as standard inflationary increase, strategic policies including the Labour Market Strategy and the Immigration Policy. The Senior Economist indicated that the appropriate policy will consider these and would be finalised and implemented by financial year 2022.

A member queried whether the minimum wage would be linked to IRB and suggested that this be considered going forward. This generated discussion around the two items being separate or inclusive. There was a general agreement from members that this should be reflected in the new policy.

Concern was expressed that a substantial increase in minimum wage could have considerable implications on the private sector in the current economic climate possibly resulting in unemployment if this increase was unsustainable. Members agreed that there should be a regular review regarding this.

A member queried whether there has been engagement with low income earners. The Senior Economist informed the Committee that contact and conversations has been made with a number of relevant individuals.

Concerns were shared on the implication in regards to local crèches, in particular the likely financial impact for single parents as an increase in the minimum wage could potentially incur increases from 25% currently to 40%.

A member queried the number of SHG employees below minimum wage. The Senior Economist confirmed that all were currently above the threshold. There were subsequent discussions around the policy having the flexibility to adapt to and reflect current and future financial climates.

The Senior Economist informed members that the consultation for the policy closes on the 26th February 2021, members suggested that another reminder given to the public through radio and other forms of media. The Committee agreed to feedback any further comments and await the final report.

The Senior Economist was thanked for attending.

77.5 CAREER ACCESS ST HELENA (CASH) PRESENTATION

The Career Access and Economic Policy Assistant presented to members the role of CASH, its operation, likely staffing, services offered and logistics including digital access, relevant templates and progress so far and provision for returning St Helenians. It was noted that at this time, the location of CASH office was unknown.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that the budget currently allocated for CASH would be transferred to the Education and Employment Directorate on its launch. It had been suggested by Administration that a 'soft' launch would be more applicable at this time to allow the current system to be integrated with the new system of CASH.

The Career Access and Economic Policy Assistant was thanked for the comprehensive presentation and left the meeting.

77.11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Education and Employment Committee will be held on Wednesday 17 March 2021 commencing at 0900 hours at the ELC Hall.

There being no further items to discuss the meeting closed at 11:20 hrs



Hon. Clint Beard
Chairperson
Education and Employment Committee

Date: 17/03/2021.