

ST. HELENA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE PRESIDENT

The Honourable Mrs Maureen Thompson

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

The Honourable Chief Secretary	-	Mrs Susan O'Bey
The Honourable Financial Secretary	-	Mr Dax Richards
The Honourable Attorney General	-	Mr Allen Cansick

ELECTED MEMBERS

The Honourable Clint Richard Beard
 The Honourable Cruyff Gerard Buckley
 The Honourable Gavin George Ellick
 The Honourable Jeffrey Robert Ellick
 The Honourable Corinda Sebastiana Stuart Essex
 The Honourable Anthony Arthur Green
 The Honourable Lawson Arthur Henry
 The Honourable Cyril Kenneth Leo
 The Honourable Christine Lilian Scipio
 The Honourable Derek Franklin Thomas
 The Honourable Russell Keith Yon

The Honourable Brian William Isaac	On sick leave
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CLERK OF COUNCILS

Mrs Connie Johnson

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Friday, 28th August, 2020

The Council met at 10.00 am
in the Council Chamber, Jamestown

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

ORDER OF THE DAY

1. FORMAL ENTRY OF THE PRESIDENT

2. PRAYERS
(Deacon Ernest Fritz)

3. ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT

Honourable Members, ladies and gentlemen and all radio listeners, good morning and a very warm welcome to our Seventeenth meeting of Legislative Council. I should first explain that the Honourable Speaker, Mr John Cranfield, is unwell and therefore unable to be present today. Members will also note that in addition to the Speaker, Councillor Isaac is also not with us and I am sure that you will join me in wishing them both well.

So, Honourable Members, this might be a good time to remind you that this is my first time to chair a formal meeting of Legislative Council, so I hope that I can count on your support.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to Deacon Ernest Fritz for opening the meeting with prayer. A big thank you to Mr Merlin George who once again agreed to perform the duties of Mace Bearer today and also to Andrew and his colleagues at SAMS Radio for providing support in relaying the proceedings of this House to our radio listeners.

I do not propose to make a long speech, but I would just like to take a moment, because they are our future, to congratulate the students of all schools for their noticeable achievements with their examinations assessments this year.

So, without further delay, may we now turn our attention to today's Order Paper that consists of 2 Sessional Papers, 5 Questions, 1 Motion followed by the usual Adjournment Debate. I will now call on the Clerk to announce the next item of business, please. Thank you.

4. PAPERS

SP 34/2020 – The Honourable Financial Secretary.

Deputy Speaker –
The Honourable Financial Secretary.

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Madam Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 34/2020 entitled Audit St Helena – Performance Audit Benchmarking Primary and Secondary Education.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 35/2020 – The Honourable Jeffrey Ellick.

Deputy Speaker –
Honourable Jeffrey Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –
Madam Speaker, Members of Legislative Council, as a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I am pleased to present to this House Sessional Paper 35/2020 being the report of the formal sessions held on 27th April, 4th May and 18th May 2020. Madam Speaker, with your permission, I'll make a short statement. This sessional report covers the Public Accounts Committee's scrutiny of the Performance Audit reports on the procurement of the sea freight contractor, procurement of the Fuel Management Contractor, the Jamestown Hospital refurbishment project and the 1, 2, 3 Main Street Hotel Development. In due course, it is expected the Financial Secretary will convey a response to Legislative Council in accordance with section 69 (9) of the Constitution. Madam Speaker, I beg to lay Sessional Paper 35/2020.

Ordered to lie on the table.

Deputy Speaker –
Next item, please?

5. QUESTIONS

Deputy Speaker -
Honourable Attorney General?

The Hon. Allen Cansick (Attorney General) –
Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that pursuant to Standing Order 20 the time requirements for delivery of questions to the Chief Secretary under Standing Order 10, Rule 5 are suspended.

Deputy Speaker-
Is there a seconder, please?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Madam Speaker, I beg to second.

Deputy Speaker –
Honourable Attorney General?

The Hon. Allen Cansick –

Madam Speaker, Order 10, Rule 5, requires that the Clerk of Council sends all questions to the Chief Secretary 10 days clear of the start of a meeting. The purpose of the Rule is to allow Government sufficient time to prepare questions to prepare answers to questions. However, as today's proceedings were convened at short notice it was agreed that the Government would be prepared to dispense with this requirement subject to the agreement of Members. This will mean that Members questions can be considered and answered today.

Order 20 Rule 2 details that the motion is to be decided without amendments or debate.

Deputy Speaker –

The Motion is that pursuant to Standing Order 20 the time requirements for delivery of questions to the Chief Secretary under Standing Order 10, Rule 5 are suspended.

Question put and agreed to.

Question No. 1 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Honourable Chief Secretary.

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Secretary tell this Council why a hard copy of all substantive official reports and documents released to the public is not placed in the Public Library?

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O'Bey (Chief Secretary) –

Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for her question. As part of the modernisation of SHG, which commenced in 2012, as well as the ongoing work on continuous improvement aiming to achieve efficiencies, there has been a drive to keep the amount of printed documentation to a minimum and as such all reports are uploaded to the Government website. We recognise that not all members of the public will have internet access and to address this, the Public Library has introduced an electronic system whereby all published documents are available for public viewing on the Library laptop and staff are available to provide assistance to any members of the public who require support in accessing this facility. Going forward, however, we will endeavour to provide a hard copy of key strategic public interest reports for reading in the Public Library and we will make the public aware of their availability via Press Releases when such documents are published.

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary for that response and on a point of information I would like to say that it is a constant bone of contention at the moment with the public that there are not hard copies available because although the public state the Library staff are very helpful with actually getting things up on screen for them there are a number of individuals who prefer to read a hard copy and do it at their own time, even if they're having to sit in the Library to do

it, so that's a very pleasing step forward and I hope to see this fully implemented asap. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker –
The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –
Thank you for that, Dr Essex, just to say that it has started this week. Of course, the Governance Report is in hard copy and the recent reports that were approved in ExCo this week are also being made available in hard copy.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Thank you.

Question No. 2 – The Honourable Christine Scipio to ask the Honourable Chairman of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Deputy Speaker –
Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, will the Honourable Chairman of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee say what action has been undertaken to regulate a taxi fare structure?

Deputy Speaker –
Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley (Chairman, ENRD) –
Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for her question. The Road Traffic Ordinance 1985 is currently in force that makes provision for the Governor in Council to make regulations prescribing the maximum and minimum fares that may be charged by Public Service Vehicles plying for hire, Cap 60. The new Road Traffic Ordinance 2016, still to be enacted, also makes a similar provision, Cap 73. There are currently no regulations regulating fares for taxis. The Road Traffic Ordinance 2016 was taken out for further consultation earlier this year, particularly to seek public views on drink/driving limits, seat belts, fixed penalty notices for driving offences and licensing of Public Service Vehicles. The Ordinance is now with our legal draughters and will be brought back to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee at the end of September, early October, for consideration. The Committee will also consider regulating taxi fares, but this would be best done through wide consultation with stakeholders, including taxi owners, the Tourism Sector and the Police to determine the best way forward. St Helena Tourism has also developed a best practice scheme which requires those taxis wishing to be accredited with St Helena Tourism to adhere to an agreed list of operating standards and this will include customer service and quality standards of vehicles themselves. It was agreed with taxi drivers that this is a good starting point, a fare structure would be implemented for people who make bookings through the Tourist Office.

Deputy Speaker –
Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Madam Deputy Speaker, may I rise in a point of information?

Deputy Speaker –

Thanks a lot, yes.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I raised this question in October 2018 and at that time I was told exactly the same thing, that there will be a consultation with stakeholders, including taxi owners, the Tourism Sector and the Police to determine the way forward. Thank you, Deputy Speaker. May I now ask the question?

Deputy Speaker –

Yes.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Deputy Madam Speaker, will the Honourable Chairman of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee say what is the timeframe to implement the revised Road Traffic Ordinance?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is envisaged that the 2016 Road Traffic Ordinance to come back to the Committee in late September, early October. It is currently with the AG's Chambers and the process has been taking so long because we've identified several anomalies which has results in a few revisions to the Ordinance and it's now been agreed that aspects of the Ordinance will be taken out for further public consultation and this was done earlier this year.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Cruyff Buckley. Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Deputy Madam Speaker, may I rise on a point of information?

Deputy Speaker –

Yes, you may.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Deputy Madam Speaker. In October 2018, I, in this House, we were told that there were identified several anomalies, four years ago, and I'm hearing the same answer today.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Christine Scipio.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

May I rise on a point of information, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Deputy Speaker –

Yes, the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

The Honourable Member on my right is correct, those anomalies were identified some time ago, but due to pressures within the legal system and until the arrival of the Legal Draughtsperson they could not be addressed, those issues are now being addressed in the timescale that the Honourable Chair has indicated. I hope that clarifies the situation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Dr Corinda Essex.

Question No. 3 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Honourable Financial Secretary.

Deputy Speaker –

Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will the Honourable Financial Secretary tell this Council what new funding streams have been identified by the External Funding Co-Ordinator and their estimated monetary value?

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. Madam Speaker, Members will be aware that in 2019 after a period of consultation and the formulation of a draft funding strategy it was agreed that the focus of the work of the External Funding Co-ordinator would be targeted predominantly towards raising funds for heritage projects whilst also exploring any other sources of funding which St Helena might be eligible for. This was agreed taking into consideration the St Helena Government were in discussions with HMG around a new Capital Investment Programme and the fact SHG have already well-established channels for seeking environmental funding for projects funded through donors such as Darwin, RSPB and the Blue Belt Programmes. The Honourable Member will be aware that whilst there is a huge list of potential sources out there, because St Helena is a UK Overseas Territory in receipt of financial aid we do not qualify for the vast majority of potential sources. As such, the External Funding Co-ordinator has been focusing on raising funds for our heritage and has set up a UK Charity through which all funding will be channelled. The Charity laws of the UK requires the charity to have a defined purpose and donors generally support specific themes. With this in mind, the British Napoleonic Bi-centenary Trust was established earlier this year and is due to be officially launched on 10th September 2020. The Trust has a Board of Trustees with some very influential members of society who have an interest in St Helena and/or Napoleon. The idea is the Trust would attract funding and donations to help St Helena prepare for and deliver a successful event for the May 21 Bi-centenary of the death of the French Emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte who was exiled to the island and died in St Helena. This would mean using the Napoleonic Bi-centenary as a springboard to attract heritage funding. Essentially, restoration funding could be sought for parts of the island that either linked directly to the bi-centenary or would have been in heavy use from tourism during the bicentenary events. To date, the External Funding Co-ordinator has been able to secure pro bono work to

the value of upwards of £100,000. This has been mainly through survey and 3D imagery works carried out earlier this year by a member of the Texas AM University Team, designs and costings for the project done by Avison Young, a international real estate company and research activities being carried out by a Research Assistant from Oxford University. The projects that have been identified in collaboration with the Bi-centenary Working Groups includes Jacob's Ladder, Upper and Lower Bank's Battery, including the Lime Kiln and associated trail from Ruperts, Munden's Battery and the trail to Ruperts, Toby's Cottage which is a slave cultural interpretation centre and High Knoll Fort. The Trust will focus its initial fund-raising activities on Toby's Cottage. Like most things, Covid-19 has impacted upon the programme which heritage funding sources also becoming difficult to secure as many donors and philanthropists have seen significant losses in funding and wealth. The original plan was to have the funding in place so that the works could start on Toby's Cottage before May '21, the Trust now intends to use May '21 as the platform to kick-start the fundraising activities.

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Chief Secretary. Will the Honourable Chief Secretary state whether the.....

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Haven't had promotion yet, I said I haven't had that promotion yet.

Deputy Speaker –

It's Financial Secretary.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

I beg your pardon, Financial Secretary. Will the Financial Secretary state whether the contract of the External Funding Co-ordinator be still in place and, if so, when it will expire?

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I can confirm that the contract for the External Funding Co-ordinator is still in place and is due to expire at the end of July 2021.

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Will the Honourable Financial Secretary state whether it's envisaged that he will be targeting any other key areas beyond the bi-centenary activities?

Deputy Speaker –

Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Madam Speaker, the way the contract is designed we only have a hundred days per year of time to be able to do it, it is not a full-time role, so if you remember, the focus that we agreed

collectively as Government was that the best use of that time was to try to explore those other areas of funding which mainly included the heritage projects, however, we are continuing to explore other options for funding, things like sports funding that might be available as well and as and when those opportunities arise the External Funding Co-ordinator usually channels it through to myself and then I get in contact directly with those organisations who would possibly be eligible for those funding sources.

Question No. 4 – The Honourable Christine Scipio to ask the Honourable Chief Secretary.

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Deputy Madam Speaker, will the Honourable Chief Secretary tell this House if the current public transport system is meeting its objectives and current demand?

Deputy Speaker –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey (Chief Secretary) –

Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for her question. By way of background information, the framework of the current public transport timetable is, timetables, sorry, is primarily set to meet the needs of SHG shift workers and this has been the case since 2012 when SHG ceased to provide home to duty transport for staff in the Health, Social Care and Police and Prison Sectors. Timetables were revised in consultation with senior staff in the Health and the then Safeguarding Directorates as part of the procurement process for the existing contracts which commenced in March 2016 as they wanted to ensure that adequate shift handover times were factored into the timetables. This requirement was taken into account and the final timetables were shared with both Directorates for review before becoming operational. It has been brought to the attention of the SHG Contract Manager in the past few weeks that the needs of the now Children and Adult Social Care Directorate have changed as the demand for residential care as well as the number of employees needed to deliver the care has increased. The Directorate has agreed to provide details of all their current needs and once all the information is received the Contract Manager will work with the contractor to ascertain how these needs can be best met within the existing resources available. There are currently approximately eighty SHG shift workers making use of the public transport. The other timetabled journeys, especially those to and from Jamestown, are generally well utilised, especially by shoppers and appear to meet demand as ticket sales range from around 1,800 to 2,000 tickets per month. The cost of tickets has remained the same since 2016. Since the existing contracts were entered into, a number of additional journeys have been added which include a route to and from the airport on Saturdays to coincide with flight arrivals, when, of course, we had regular, scheduled flights, a weekly route to and from Plantation House and Longwood House to coincide with opening times for tours and the introduction of late night transport on Friday and Saturday nights and next week, at the request of members of the public, an additional call to Thompson’s Hill will be carried out on Tuesday mornings so that there is opportunity for residents in that area to travel into Jamestown for medical appointments, so this demonstrates, I feel, that the transport system is flexible enough to be able to accommodate needs and changes as they arise. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Deputy Speaker –
The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
Thank you, Deputy Speaker and thank you to the Honourable Chief Secretary for providing the public with an update with the flexibility in the system, the transport system. Will the Honourable Chief Secretary tell this House how the objectives and demands is being measured?

Deputy Speaker –
Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey-
Thank you, Madam Speaker and Honourable Christine Scipio. Just to say that the objectives are being met through regular meetings with the Contract Manager and the Contract Providers and also, obviously, through the monitoring of ticket sales.

Deputy Speaker –
Thank you, Chief Secretary.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary, sorry, Madam Deputy Chief Secretary, you did ask us to support you as this was your first meeting and there’s me jumping up and speaking and not allowing you to call me, I do apologise.

Deputy Speaker –
The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
Thank you, Deputy Madam Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Secretary tell this House that the review of the public transport system had recommended a dial a ride transport and a hop on, hop off bus provision and was this explored by St Helena Government?

Deputy Speaker –
Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –
Thank you, Madam Speaker. I can confirm that this was, indeed, raised and it was discussed with the current contractor. However, due to a lack of resources and uncertainty in relation to the demand for such service it wasn’t possible to incorporate in the current contract.

Deputy Speaker –
Thank you, Chief Secretary. Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
Thank you, Deputy Madam Speaker. Deputy Madam Speaker, will the Honourable Chief Secretary say if some consideration could be given knowing that these recommendations were made in 2003 and with so many significant changes in the island if consideration could be given to reviewing this and do a survey with the public to understand or ascertain if there was a demand?

Deputy Speaker –
Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –
Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I’m sure that that can be built into the review and I shall pass that on to the Contract Manager and to see what can be considered.

Deputy Speaker –
Thank you, Chief Secretary. The Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley –
Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the Honourable Chief Secretary say what is the approximate value of providing a public transport system?

Deputy Speaker –
The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –
So, the total annual subsidy for the public transport system is £70,268.

Deputy Speaker –
Thank you, Chief Secretary. Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –
Thank you, Madam Speaker. Would the Chief Secretary look if it is possible for a once a week visit at the weekend with the public transport for the people of Ruperts?

Deputy Speaker –
Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –
I shall.....

The Hon. Lawson Henry –
Madam Deputy Speaker, can I rise on a point of information?

Deputy Speaker –
Yes, Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –
Recently I was approached by some people of Ruperts to ask for an occasional visit to Ruperts. It was agreed with the public service provider and our Contracts Manager, there was no uptake. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker –
Thank you, Councillor Henry. The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –
Thank you, Madam Speaker, I don’t know when this was undertaken, but certainly in recent weeks I’ve been approached by residents within Ruperts asking if the public transport could do

a weekly visit there, hence the reason I raise it, I'm asking for an investigation to be carried out to see if the demand is there, but, like I say, in recent weeks residents of Ruperts approached me, that's the reason why I asked the question.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Derek Thomas. Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just to say that this trial was actually introduced two months ago during the period of Canne France working in Ruperts and it was trialled for a month, but there wasn't an uptake for it. However, again we'll look at seeing whether it is possible.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Chief Secretary.

Question No. 5 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Honourable Chief Secretary.

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Secretary tell this Council how many Technical Co-operation posts have been localised within the past three years and how many are planned to be localised by 2023?

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

Madam Speaker, thank you Honourable Dr Corinda Essex. I can confirm that since 2016 there are eight Technical Co-operation posts which have been localised with another four due to be localised in 2020 as per our succession planning. There are a further eleven succession plans in progress, the majority of which will be complete by 2023 and the remainder by 2025. Through the Workforce Planning Reviews, there are a further twenty-nine posts that are in focus and have been identified for review as roles that could potentially be localised over the next five years and work is commencing currently.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Chief Secretary. Honourable Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you. Will the Honourable Chief Secretary tell this House by what process posts are identified for localisation?

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

Thank you, Madam Speaker. The process by which posts are identified is through the Workforce Planning and discussions are held with Directors on a regular basis. Those posts then are built in to the succession plan and work is done to ensure that there is adequate handover and staff development in place in order to facilitate this.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Chief Secretary. The Honourable Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Will the Honourable Chief Secretary elaborate a little more on what type of staff development activities are provided?

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

It will vary from post to post but generally it would include mentoring, further additional studies if that is seen as appropriate and also on the job training.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Chief Secretary. The Honourable Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Will the Honourable Chief Secretary state whether current holders of Technical Co-operation posts have an element within their contract that obligates them to provide mentoring and training to local staff members?

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Dr Corinda Essex for reminding me of this, that is exactly right, all TC contracts now have an element built into their contracts which state that there is an obligation on their part to, where appropriate, identify a local successor and to work with such in order to ensure that there is a transition.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Chief Secretary. Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Will the Honourable Chief Secretary state how, if they are mentored and monitored, in fact, this is taking place?

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

All officers, both contract officers and permanent staff members are subject to an annual staff appraisal process which calls for regular one to one's with their Line Managers and it is through

that process that their objectives are monitored. They are also monitored by the Human Resources and Organisational Development Directorate and regular meetings are held with members of staff and the Director of HR&OD as required.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Chief Secretary. The Honourable Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

So, on a point of clarification and leading to a further question, in some instances, individuals are highly skilled, but they are not actually skilled in passing those skills on to others, they are not trained trainers, for example, so in that circumstance, what mentoring is provided to those individuals to ensure that they can, in fact, successfully transfer those skills?

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I said, it would vary from post to post and the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex is absolutely right, particularly in technical fields they are very specialist and it isn’t always that the personnel will have the appropriate mentoring skills. What I can confirm is that recently we’ve launched a programme of mentor training to assist with all staff, both technical and local staff, to provide these additional skills and support and, of course, where there are situations where it isn’t possible and if that is brought to our attention then we would seek to address those on a case by case basis.

Deputy Speaker –

Thanks, Chief Secretary.

6.

MOTIONS

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Honourable Susan O’Bey –

Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the Legislative Council, pursuant Standing Order 10, dispense with the 10-day notice period for the motion detailed in the Order Paper of the first sitting of the 17th meeting of the Legislative Council.

Madam Speaker, Standing Order 10 of the Legislative Council requires that 10 days clear notice be given for motions. Rule 2 of Standing Order 10 however allows for this notice to be dispensed with following consent of the President and the assent of the majority of the Members of Legislative Council.

Deputy Speaker –

Do I have to have a seconder for this, please?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Madam Speaker, I beg to second.

Deputy Speaker –

Members, the question is that the Legislative Council, pursuant Standing Order 10, dispense with the 10-day notice period for the motion detailed in the Order Paper of the first sitting of the 17th meeting of the Legislative Council.

Question put and agreed to.

Deputy Speaker –

I received a request from His Excellency the Governor to attend this next item of business and if needed he wished to say a few words towards the end of the debate. I have agreed to this request. Clerk please can you call for the Governor, please?

His Excellency the Governor (Dr Philip Rushbrook) -

Good morning everybody.

Members –

Good morning, Governor.

HE the Governor –

Thank you very much.

6.

MOTIONS

The Honourable Chief Secretary.

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the Legislative Council resolves that there be public consultation on the two alternate systems of governance for St Helena developed through the work of Professor Sarkin and subsequently the Governance Commission.

Deputy Speaker –

Is there a seconder, please?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Madam Speaker, I beg to second.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Financial Secretary. Honourable Mover, you may now speak to the Motion.

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Members will be aware that Professor Jeremy Sarkin visited the island twice last year to carry out extensive consultation to ascertain how people feel about current and future political governance arrangements. His final report shows that there is clear support for change across the island but concern about what it should be and whether that change could be workable. Following receipt of the Sarkin Report, a Governance Commission was established whose purpose was to take a pragmatic view on how the governance options

suggested by Professor Sarkin could work on St Helena. The Commission's Report, which was published last week, is designed to aid an understanding of the differences which they have identified between the current system, the current Committee system that is, and the alternative governance systems suggested by Professor Sarkin. The Commission was made up of seven independent members drawn from across the community and included two representatives from the Youth Parliament. No serving elected members or senior SHG officials were members of the Commission and legal and secretariat support was provided respectively by the AG's Chambers and the Governor's Office. The Commission focused on assessing each of the governance options identified in Professor Sarkin's Report against three principle concerns with the existing system raised by the public to Professor Sarkin. St Helena residents said better governance had to show clarity on who is politically responsible for the policies and decisions made on each topic; clarity on who is politically accountable for the delivery and performance of services; and, swifter decision making and delivery of services. Whilst the main focus of the Commission's Report was on the two alternative governance systems, the members of the Commission also gave their opinions on other government matters. These included matters such as the electoral registration arrangements, er, sorry, electoral registration arrangements, reorganisation of the SHG Administration, example, whole questions, representation of constituents' issues, ministerial or committee chairs and Public Service Codes of Practice, remuneration and reserved powers of the Governor. The Report outlines options for improving the system of governance on St Helena and there are two options presented – a revised Committee system and a Ministerial form of Government. The Commission did not take a collective view on which option would be best for St Helena. The Report does, however, list out the pros and cons as identified by the Commission Members on the two alternative governance systems compared to the present one and in doing so Commission Members drew upon their knowledge of the St Helena Community, the functioning of the present Committee system and experience from other Overseas Territories. The Commission does not make any recommendation on a preferred new governance arrangement; this is a matter for public consultation potentially followed by a formal poll or a formal and final consultation. Governance reform is an issue of great importance to the future of this island and it is crucial that public opinion is taken into account. Therefore, it is proposed that an extensive programme of public consultation is carried out during September so that there are ample opportunities for the public to explore the proposals in greater detail and to feed in their comments.

In summing up, Madam Speaker, the purpose of the Motion today is to seek Councillors endorsement to commence a round of public engagement and explanation on the two governance systems and how they are likely to work on St Helena. This engagement is the forerunner to a planned Motion to this House at a later date to decide the formal approach to establishing an expression of public will via either a public consultation exercise or a consultative poll. Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Secretary. Honourable Members, the Motion is that the Legislative Council resolves that there will be a public consultation on the two alternate systems of governance for St Helena developed through the work of Professor Sarkin and subsequently the Governance Commission. The Motion is now open for debate. Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this motion that there be public consultation on the two alternative systems of Governance for St Helena through the work of Professor Sarkin and subsequently the Governance Commission. One of the forms of Government being proposed

by Professor Sarkin is that of a Ministerial System of Government. What is not clear, however, is what changes to our Constitution Her Majesty's Government is prepared to make.

One of the main issues that will need to be clarified and before the electorate is asked which system of governance they would wish to see in going forward is the role of our Governor, should, for example, a ministerial system of government is preferred. This is critical and we need to know before so that we can fully understand who will lead the cabinet under a ministerial system should the electorate vote for this system.

In supporting this motion, I do so on the basis that the Mover address this issue and facilitate discussions with the Minister and this House so that we are clear on this important matter before the people is consulted at a later stage in the process. I therefore request the Mover to address this point in the House today.

Finally, I am sure we would all wish to see the current Oath of Confidentiality change to the same as sworn by Members of the UK Parliament or similar, therefore, I hope that the opportunity to change this will be done for the next Council.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move and support this Motion. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you. The Honourable Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I give this Motion my full support as there is considerable evidence to suggest that the current Committee system is no longer fit for purpose as an efficient and effective governance model. Following the input of Professor Sarkin and the excellent work of the Governance Commission, there are now two alternatives to be considered. Before continuing, I wish to place on record how pleasing it was to see two teenagers participating actively in the work of the Commission. Such involvement of young people provides them with valuable knowledge and exposure within the political arena and should be encouraged and replicated more widely.

It is essential that public consultation on such an important issue as what system of governance is most suitable for St Helena takes place and it is equally important that this is not rushed. Before the public can be expected to make an informed decision, they must have adequate time to understand the alternatives and their wider implications fully before they make their choice. This process must not be hurried in order to get a new system in place by mid-2021 when the General Election is due as the risks associated with the wrong decision being made are too high. This is why I strongly recommend that a longer period of consultation than that suggested is, in fact, put into place. Clearly it would not be desirable to hold the 20/21 General Election under the current system and then dissolve Legislative Council after a short or shortened period in order to call a further General Election to kick-start the preferred new system, but I would argue that this would be better than pushing for a mandate before the public is ready and confident to make a fully informed decision. Whatever decision is taken will not be likely to be able to be reversed within a short or even medium-term period and that is why it is so crucial that the decision made is right for St Helena and has been properly thought through.

Madam Speaker, I wish to remind this Honourable House that the St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha Constitution Order is now eleven years old and that I've had Motions passed here previously relating to the need for review and revision of this document which requires updating and amending in a number of areas. This exercise could be undertaken in parallel with the change to a new Government system. The change initiative provides an ideal opportunity for ensuring that St Helena has a new Constitution and governance system that are fully aligned and fit for purpose. Please let us make sure that we do not fall into the trap of

putting the cart before the horse by allowing this opportunity for wider constitutional reform to pass us by. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Corinda Essex. The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Deputy Madam Speaker. Deputy Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the community who participated in the discussions with Professor Sarkin whilst on island. Acknowledgement is also extended to the individuals involved in the Governance Commission who gave up their valuable time to identify workable options to improve our political system. A public consultation on revised Committee or Ministerial systems are most welcomed as the public's input on matters affecting them is sought which will provide an opportunity for them to express their opinions and concerns. It is recognised that the process for this consultation must be dealt with in a speedy matter, but it must not be a rushed approach. The community must be given adequate time to fully understand both the pros and the cons of the alternative systems and considerable effort should be given via different media to educate our community. Members of the Legislative Council should not be involved with this consultation, it must be led by independent body who have a fair understanding of the current system and who can provide answers to questions asked. A revised or new system will come at a cost. Will the Honourable Mover say how this will impact on the community that is already hard pressed? The Governance Commission Report indicates that if any constitutional changes are needed a submission for amendment needs to be presented to the Privy Council by November 2020, less than a hundred days away. Is this sufficient time for a consultation? The Motion seeks to obtain information to make changes to the lives of St Helenians and the way we do business for possibly for the next thirty years. It is imperative that we do not have change for changes sake, but change that is necessary and in the best interests of the island and its people, both young and old. I beg to move.

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this Motion that there be public consultation on the two alternative systems of governance for St Helena developed through the work of Professor Sarkin and subsequently the Governance Commission.

Madam Speaker, the present Committee system is not performing efficiently as many would expect. Three main areas for improvement which are frequently mentioned and the public becomes frustrated are – (1) a desire for clearer individual political responsibility on taking decisions; (2) clearer political accountability for delivery of public activities; and, (3) implementation of decision making in a more speedy manner. The two proposed systems recommended for further examination on their suitability for St Helena – a revised Committee system based on modifying the present Committee system or a Ministerial system similar to the approach used in several other Overseas Territories. Madam Speaker, we are well aware that there are real challenging times ahead and the level of funding from Her Majesty's Government is not going to be what we would like or like to see in building and shaping our island for the future. Difficult decisions and choices will have to be made which will require strong leadership and accountability. The island would need to see a governance system which will ensure someone is ultimately responsible and identifiable for making such political decisions, ensure someone is accountable politically for delivering results and services within

their area of responsibility and ensure decisions and results are achieved more promptly. The two systems should be properly consulted and both systems fully explained to the public, the advantages and benefits of both systems in order for the public to make a proper informed choice of what system they would like to see which will best serve our island through accountability and good governance. Madam Speaker, I will end, I give my support to the Honourable Colleague, Councillor Lawson Henry that before public consultation is engaged the public will need clarity around a Ministerial system as to the role of the Governor and the Chief Minister, these should be properly identified and explained to the public in order if they choose to favour the Ministerial type system. Madam Speaker, I support the Motion and I beg to move.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Derek Thomas. Any other Honourable Member wishes to speak? Honourable Tony Green?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Thank you, Madam Speaker. On this occasion I can be brief. I support the Motion.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Tony Green. Honourable Jeffrey Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Motion, I will be brief. It's my view that St Helena can only move forward on this matter if we have the will of the people, therefore, it is imperative that our people are consulted on the two suggested alternative systems of governance and given the necessary information so they can make a decision in moving political governance forward. If this Motion is passed, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage the St Helenian public to make a concerted effort to participate in the consultation process. Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

Deputy Speaker –

Honourable Russell Yon?

The Hon. Russell Yon –

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Motion. Madam Speaker, I first would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Sarkin for the work he undertook in reviewing the current system of governance for St Helena and for developing two alternate systems which it is hoped the people of St Helena will now get the opportunity to decide which will be the best governance system to take St Helena into the future.

Madam Speaker, whether the people choose a more robust system to what we have currently in place or a ministerial system, I believe it is time for a change, however, with the change will come challenges, not only within the governance system itself but across the Island as a whole. Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Governance Commission who was tasked with reviewing the Sarkin report and subsequently we now have this Motion before us today. I strongly believe that the work of the members of that Commission is not yet complete as I see them strongly positioned to lead on this public consultation process.

Madam Speaker, I do hope that during the public consultation the people of St Helena will come out in force and take every opportunity presented to them to make their views heard and be accounted for. This is a golden opportunity for change and like all things let this change be

for the betterment of the future for St Helena. Therefore, Madam Speaker, the voice of the people must be heard and listened to. Madam Speaker, I support the Motion.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Russell Yon. Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I support the Motion, I believe public input will be important for an inclusive system that will be able to improve systems, strengths to perform political functions that will hopefully reap benefits for St Helena and its people. We need a fit for purpose governance system that will allow accountability and better communication aspects for achieving political leadership that will benefit the island. I also would encourage the public who is essential to this and I hope that they will attend the consultations that will create good debate and understanding. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker –

Any other Honourable Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Thank you, Ma'am. I support this Motion, but one thing I would like to say is that for once let's be open, transparent and accountable. Please don't have these words in place for the new system and we ain't being truthful. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker –

Honourable Cruyff Buckley?

The Hon. Cruyff Buckley-

Thank you, Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this Motion and I share many of the sentiments expressed around this table today from my fellow colleagues. I think I will want to emphasise the point that we need to have our youth along with us with this engagement, there's some good work being done through the revision of the Elections Ordinance which seeks to lower the voting age, I feel St Helena's demographics is screaming out to get our youth involved in the political arena and after all they are the ones who are gonna have to feel the repercussions of whatever system we implement. Madam Speaker, I support the Motion.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you. I now call upon His Excellency the Governor who wish to say a few words.

Governor Dr Philip Rushbrook –

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'm here largely to observe, this is a decision for people of the island to take forward on the governance system they want. I would like to reiterate whatever the outcome of this process on the future governance system, the Governor's Office will work alongside the future elected representatives. My office stands available to help to support the consultation, the informal consultation exercise at this stage, and to take forward further work with elected members and those doing the consultation to support their meetings, to facilitate potentially a Youth Parliament and also to provide any further information or briefing or relations with London. So, in that sense, I am making my office available to support this process in any way that is possible. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Your Excellency. Honourable Mover, do you wish to respond to the debate?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I’d like to thank Members for their support for this Motion. I can confirm, in response to some of the issues raised by Councillor Henry and others this morning, that a Working Group will be established which will lead on looking at the potential changes to the Constitution and relevant administrative processes and that work will go on in tandem as the public consultation is taking place, just so that people are aware of what potential changes would be needed to the Constitution should there be a decision to move towards a new governance arrangement. Indeed, as indicated in my exposition earlier, the Attorney General’s Chambers has supported the Commission by already looking at potential changes which will need to be made. We recognise that this is a very tight time process in terms of getting any amendments to the Constitution through the relevant approvals process. I can also confirm that the consultation will be led by the Commission, Members of the Commission are very keen to take this work forward, so it will mean that it will be led by an independent body, it will utilise different media platforms, including public meetings and will be widespread in terms of allowing people to engage with the process. I agree with Members that I hope all members of public will come, will rally forward and take advantage of the opportunity that this consultation will allow and I will ensure that once we have finalised the programme for consultation and the timeframes that this is made public and also that Members are given due notice of what is going to, what this is going to entail. So, in summing up, I would like to thank Members for their support and Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

Deputy Speaker –

The Motion is that the Legislative Council resolves that there be a public consultation on the two alternate systems of governance for St Helena developed through the work of Professor Sarkin and subsequently the Governance Commission.

Question put and agreed to.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you.

7.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Deputy Speaker –

The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn sine die. Apologies. Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this do now adjourn until 25th September 2020.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there a seconder, please?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Madam Speaker, I beg to second.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Motion is that this Council do now adjourn until Friday, 25th September 2020. The Motion is now open for debate.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Adjournment Debate. Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, we are well aware of the financial constraints we are facing, yet when it comes to Income Related Benefits, we seem to be awarding payments across the board. My understanding of the Income Related Benefits Scheme is that it should be a benefit for those persons who are not able to work. Employment at this present time is a challenge and it would appear that the numbers for Income Related Benefit payments are increasing. We need to do something to address this issue. Madam Speaker, I sympathise with many of our people who want to work and simply cannot find a job. A number of these people have said to me they are becoming depressed and find it very frustrating in having to rely on handouts, they want to work for their money. Madam Speaker, the law needs to be changed to reflect that those persons who are fit and capable of working should work, even if it means just two or three days a week. Persons should only be allowed to claim benefits if they are not able to work and in receipt of a medical certificate. Straightforward work can be found through cleaning and tidying up our island, that is not a difficult task, roads, land clearance, etc, it goes on and on. They want to make a valuable contribution to the island for the money they receive. I know there are challenges around employment issues, but there must be a way around this system in order to allow this to happen through a perhaps a casual work scheme. I am a member of the Social Community Development Committee and I will be pushing for the change to the legislation in order to make this happen. Many of our people who receive benefits have clearly said they don't wish to have handouts; they want to work for their money.

Madam Speaker, another issue of concern is the lack of potatoes for the island; the island has been without potatoes for a number of months. I am aware now that many people have planted potatoes and we will soon have potatoes probably for the next few months, but come again in the New Year we will be in the same boat, without potatoes again. I will ask that the Economic Development Committee to work with our importers and the relevant personnel within ENRD to see if there's a way forward in importing potatoes once again from South Africa. It is unfortunate that we have to rely on South Africa for most of our imports, it's gonna be difficult to obtain potatoes from anywhere else, so, Madam Speaker, I support the Adjournment Debate, I beg to move.

Deputy Speaker –

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

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I first wish to declare my interest as President of the Chamber of Commerce.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am taking this opportunity to raise publicly a few issues that are currently of concern to businesses and/or the wider public. The first relates to inadequate and unsatisfactory interaction and communication on the part of some St Helena Government officers employed within Directorates. This is not occurring at Director level and I have raised it at that level and/or with the individuals concerned when I have received complaints. Sadly, however, the issues still persist and are detrimental to the image and public relations of St Helena Government. I am constantly being informed that persons or businesses are awaiting feedback or information and have received no indicative timescale for receipt of this, or that they have not even received an acknowledgement to communications sent. I have recently

experienced this twice myself. A month ago, I submitted a detailed formal response as part of a consultation exercise, which was acknowledged by the copy recipient, but not the key officer. A month has passed and I have heard nothing, I do not consider that to be acceptable. Last week, a revised draft of a document that I had suggested changes regarding when it came to Committee was sent to all members of the relevant Committee for further comment, but not to me. When I contacted the officer, he apologised and claimed that he did not have my e-mail address, although he has communicated with me previously by this method. The workload of these persons to whom I am referring has not been impacted by Covid-19 and I am frankly finding it disappointing that there is not a more proactive and professional approach being taken. I do not wish to have to resort to making official complaints and nor do my constituents, but the situation needs rectifying before further reputational damage to Government is caused. Perhaps it can be ensured that the contact details for all elected members are available within all SHG sections and that all officers, particularly technical co-operation officers, who are unfamiliar with local work practices, are made fully aware of the established communication protocols.

The second issue relates to capital gains tax as the current provisions state, that if a dwelling is in joint ownership and the owners are not spouses or life partners, this tax is payable. This militates against friends or other family members clubbing together to purchase residential property which could ease the financial burden on our young people, in particular, and perhaps even stop them having to go offshore and also ease the current demand for Government Landlord houses and the present housing shortage. Can this issue, Honourable Financial Secretary, please be considered by the Tax and Revenue Working Group in its forthcoming deliberations?

Finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, can the same Working Group again give consideration to introducing a higher income tax band for those in receipt of income amounting to over £40,000 per annum? I am not suggesting a huge increase that would seriously impact upon the disposable income of those individuals or present disincentives, but a small, additional contribution that would help to satisfy public perceptions of inequality. Although the total gained would not be large, every little helps. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Corinda Essex. Any other Member wishes to speak? Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Deputy Madam Speaker. Deputy Madam Speaker, the World Health Organization declared a pandemic on 11 March 2020. Recent data dictates that more than 24 million cases of COVID-19 have been reported in more than 188 countries and territories, resulting in more than 821,000 deaths; more than 15.6 million people have recovered. We on St Helena thus far, have been extremely blessed that to date, there are no reported cases of COVID-19 on our island or Ascension. The reality is that Covid-19 will be around for a long time and will have social and economic impact on the lives of our people which makes living on St Helena more challenging than ever. Whilst it is accepted that the closed border situation has had knock on effects with the island's economy, it is hoped that we will take all precautionary measures to prevent this virus entering and we all will act in a responsible manner. We should not be too eager to open up to a handful of tourists whose revenue could cause a threefold increase in expenditure to contain the pandemic with serious social consequences.

Madam Deputy Speaker, despite the challenges of the pandemic, over the last few months we have seen individuals achieving professional awards, students achieving examination results, successful rock fall protection project completed and chartered flights directly from the UK

that included a technical stop. A Boeing 757-200, the largest aircraft to have landed at St Helena is a huge achievement. This is positive of COVID 19, despite repeated requests to re-visit the principle of flights from the north and increased passenger capacity where we have made very little progress.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the current discontent within the community over the saga with the fishing sector was evident in the petition presented by the St Helena Commercial Fisherman's Association on Monday morning of this week. During constituency meetings, information reveals that appears that behind closed doors, negotiations had taken place with St Helena Government's preferred bidder prior to the closing date of the procurement process; an opportunity denied to our locals. To quote a constituent "When we stop believing in ourselves, we have no future!" This state of affairs totally undermines the democratic system of this island and could have serious implications on the forthcoming consultation on the alternative systems of governance.

Deputy Madam Speaker, members of the public have asked "Why do we fly the Union Jack from the Castle flagpole during the hours of darkness? They also commented "in the old days a Police Constable would raise it at 6am and lower it at 6pm. Even I would be interested in an official response.

The Sustainable Economic Development Plan states that the key to St Helena's economic growth is to grow industry which ensures that more money enters and is retained on St Helena. Focus should be given to increasing the flow of money in and reducing money flowing out. In 2017, the island was almost wholly reliant on imported fridge eggs from South Africa. It is my understanding that imported eggs are of poor quality and any importation, leaks money from St Helena rather than circulating it, in the local economy. In 2018, St Helena Government subsidised the supply of laying chickens through securing imports of day-old chicks by air from South Africa as it was recognised that eggs are an important dietary component as they are rich in vitamins and a good source of protein. Concern has been raised by egg producers, Deputy Madam Speaker, that they are unable to sell their eggs as they are being imported by various merchants. I recognise that communication is an issue which is a two-way process. The local private sector effort should be appreciated, supported and encouraged.

It is common knowledge that earlier this year, I had a fall on the main entrance steps to the Castle and since, avoided them like a plague. I would like to say thank you to those who raised concern at that time about safety aspects and suggested that a hand rail would provide valuable assistance. Unfortunately, the seed fell on stony ground but failed to germinate. May I hasten, Deputy Madam Speaker, to add that I was not amused on Monday of this week, having been invited to witness the handing over of the petition at the Castle, to find I was locked out?

Deputy Madam Speaker, it is with much regret and disappointment that I feel that the business of this honourable house is not taken seriously. I raised the question about regulating taxi fares in October 2018, some twenty-two months ago. I have raised the same question again today only to find out that it has taken twenty-two months to do very little! Do we really care about the citizens of this island and are we serious about our fledgling tourism industry? I am concerned that a public transport system is designed to serve the needs of St Helena Government shift workers and not the needs of the community. Deputy Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you. Any other Member wishes to speak? Honourable Jeffrey Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the adjournment. I'll be short. Earlier this week, the St Helena Commercial Fisherman's Association presented a petition to Governor in Council. I

would like to acknowledge the fortitude and civility of the St Helena Commercial Fisherman's Association, well done, it is good to see people standing up for what they believe in, challenge and hold decision-makers to account, it's your right. I would encourage others also to speak up and speak out for what they believe in and it will shape our future for the better. I would also ask that as a Government we do more to engage with our people and build relationships, relationships are the key to success. Madam Speaker, I support the adjournment.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you. Anybody else wish to speak? Honourable Mover, will you wish to respond to the debate?

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

Thank you, Madam Speaker and I thank the Honourable Members for their contribution. A number of policy areas have been identified this morning. I'd just like to give a brief update as I understand it in terms of how some of these are progressing. So, the Honourable Derek Thomas mentioned about concerns in relation to benefits and access to these and I can confirm that there is a Benefits Review, a wholesale review of the benefits system, which is actually being led by the Committee on which the Honourable Member is a member. You also, Councillor Thomas, reference the concerns around people who are currently unemployed and I understand that it is the concerns of many members within this House, however, I wanted to just also remind people of the work that is being done in relation to Career Access St Helena, that is being reviewed as I speak with a view to seeing how once that is established as a part of the Education and Employment Directorate, will be able to assist people who are unemployed to be able to find work both within the public and the private sectors.

We've heard about lack of potatoes, lack of eggs and fishing, these are all three key import/export sectors or areas and I am aware that this work is being addressed through the Economic Development Committee. I am aware that with regard to potatoes that there is some work that needs to be done in terms of addressing the current regime which is related to our biosecurity. With regard to eggs, I am aware that that's another area that the Committee is addressing at the minute in terms of looking at how regulations can be in place to encourage people to use local eggs and, of course, fishing, there is ongoing work there. There is, at the moment, negotiations between the preferred bidder and SHG in terms of the fishing proposals that were received in January this year.

I apologise to the Honourable Member in relation to the handrail. That has taken longer than anticipated, however, I do know that officers are addressing this, part of the issue relates to the fact that because of the Castle being a heritage building, but I am aware that work is taking place to address it and that I am being updated on a regular basis in relation to that. Unfortunately, it has taken longer than we anticipated.

Councillor Essex raised something which is very dear to my heart as well which is in relation to inadequate communication. I fully agree with you; I also experience that, it is not helpful, it doesn't present a very good view of SHG as an organisation and, of course, Members will be aware that with the planned transformation programme that is taking place, particularly in relation to the restructuring of SHG, I have asked all Directors to ensure that we address communications within each of our Directorates. It is not good when we hear that people are having to wait days or weeks and even months in some situations for responses and that is something that we are planning to, that we want to address as a matter of urgency and I will ask members of the public to continue to make us aware and continue to make your Directors aware of areas if you are not receiving responses in an adequate timeframe. I will also ensure that all Directors have Councillors contact details and that I will ask Directors to make sure that these details are shared with all members who would normally be in contact with elected

members and my Honourable Colleague on my right, I will ask him to ensure that the capital gains tax and higher income tax band suggestions from the members of the public are taken into account by the Tax and Revenue Working Group.

This has been a very short session, Madam Speaker, but again I would like to emphasise that I thank Members for their concerns, I thank Members for their contribution to the Adjournment Debate today and will look forward to seeing how some of these policy areas progress within the relevant Council Committees. Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

Deputy Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Members that concludes our business for today, I also would like to thank you for your contributions and assistance. I now put the question that this Council do adjourn until 25th September 2020.

Question on adjournment put and agreed to.

Council adjourned until 25th September 2020.

Honourable Speaker

Date