



Economic Development Committee (EDC) Minutes

Date: 26 November 2020

Venue: Council Chamber

Time: 09.00 am

Present: **Chairman** Hon Lawson Henry
 Members: Hon Gavin Ellick
 Hon Clint Beard
 Hon Cyril Leo
 Hon Miss Christine Scipio
 Director of Enterprise, Mr Robert Midwinter
 Senior Economist, Mrs Amanda Curry Brown

Secretary Miss Anita Legg

In Attendance: Director of Resources, Mrs Michielle Yon (Item 47.3 & 47.4)
 Hon Attorney General, Mr Allen Cansick (Item 47.5)
 Crown Counsel, Mr Aldhelm Garner (Item 47.5)
 Legislative Drafter, Ms Catherine Williams (Item 47.5)
 Maritime Compliance Policy Officer, Miss Mia Henry (Item 47.5)

Apologies: Hon Financial Secretary, Mr Dax Richards
 Deputy Financial Secretary, Mr Nicholas Yon
 Chief Economist, Mrs Nicole Shamier
 Director of ENRPD, Mr Darren Duncan

OPEN SESSION

47.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting. No members of the public were present. Apologies were received from the Financial Secretary, Deputy Financial Secretary, Chief Economist and Director of ENRPD.

47.2 Declaration of Personal Interest

Cllr Ellick declared his interest in respect of receiving business support in previous years from ESH. No other personal interests were declared.

47.3 ESH Management Accounts 2020/21, Period Ending September 2020 – Director of Resources

The Director of Resources (DoR) gave a brief explanation on the accounts and invited questions:

- The DoR explained that in 2012, it was agreed in principal for the day to day operations of ESH to be funded by SHG and the project to be funded by DFID.
- It was noted that funding required for redundancy has been set aside in anticipation of redundancies. The figure required is approximately £285k and will come out of Retained Surplus, which effectively is from the SHG contribution and no additional request will be made to SHG for this purpose.
- Due to the funding required for redundancy a decision had been made not to commit to any further capital projects.
- It was noted that all operations and projects will cease on 31st March 2021.
- Concern was expressed that expertise could be lost through redundancy but it was hoped some of these skills could be utilised by SHG. However it was noted it had always been intended for ESH to be set up in its current form for only a set period.
- The DoR advised ESH would need to be formally wound-up and all assets and documents transferred to SHG. Dialogue with the Financial Secretary was currently ongoing as to how these documents could be archived for future access. The property portfolio would be transferred to Crown Estates, however it was not yet known where the loans portfolio would sit. The transfer of client's information would depend on their remaining obligation period.
- It was confirmed a sub-lease for Bertrand's Cottage had been signed in November.
- It was noted two audits would be carried out before winding-up i.e. the DFID project review and a Performance Audit report.

EDC requested an update on economic development for 2021/22, which had been indicated in the SHG budget summary would now move to the Finance Committee. The Chairman advised more work needs to be carried out on how this would be dealt with however suggested this matter could be raised during the next day's budget discussion. There was still uncertainty on how the details, of the allocation of £897k would be brought to EDC to discuss.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Resources, who remained for the next item.

47.4 ESH Updates, October 2020 – Director of Enterprise

The October progress and performance report had been circulated for advance reading. The Director of Enterprise (DoE) provided a brief overview and confirmed that ESH was in the process of winding-up but staff remained committed to delivering activities against their FCDO funded project.

The DoE then invited comments and key points raised from the discussion were:

- Mixed Messaging – 25 staff members had now been given notice with some repercussions. Staff morale was low and EDC noted that although the letter from GIC had clearly set out the direction on redundancies, there was concern with mixed messaging in the public, to the effect that some staff would simply be transferred to SHG. Following discussion, it was agreed the DoE would raise this issue with the Chief Secretary and in addition, any involvement by Elected Members would be raised with the Speaker and other Members.

Action: Director of Enterprise/ Elected Members

- Napoleonic Bicentenary – Arrangements for the bicentenary commemorations were ongoing.

Action: Director of Enterprise & Tourism

- Tourists – The DoE reported the first official tourist had arrived on island since Covid-19, who had been through the quarantine period. However, concern was raised as to how this person had received prioritisation due to tourists not being allowed to enter the island. It was noted that ESH / Tourism does not undertake the prioritisation of passengers on charter flights. It was later clarified that for the July, September, October and December flights, there was no rule against tourists arriving. However people traveling for holiday received lower priority for places on the plane than other travelers.
- Digital Marketing – The Tourist Office remained active and were trying to be involved wherever they could, video clips were also being recorded.
- Brighter Group – The DoE explained the work this group does for St Helena and what was able to be carried out with limited resources. It was agreed to invite the Director of Tourism to give a more detailed update at the next meeting.

Action: Director of Enterprise

- Longwood House Bubble – A member advised the public saw this bubble as discrimination. However Members raised concern, as the island needs to do all they can to prepare for the Bicentenary and subsequently an injection of tourism.
- Business Support – The DoE assured members that every endeavor would be made to support business applications before closure, provided they complied with the terms and conditions. He also advised there was no way for ESH to regulate the business community but the issue of contingent liability in relation to specialist areas was raised in any case.
- Post Box Walks – It was noted there were 21 walks plus paths, which required continuous maintenance; spend this year would relate to easier access, such as installation of wooden stakes and steps, etc. It was confirmed the books had originally been produced by Tourism, then handed to the Conservation Group.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Enterprise and the Director of Resources for keeping the committee updated, the Director of Resources then left the meeting.

47.5 Merchant Shipping Bill 2020, Memo No 22/2020 – Attorney General & Team

The Attorney General invited the Crown Counsel to brief EDC, who advised this was a new bill and the first step in putting the Merchant Shipping legislation into St Helena law. It was important in regards to international obligations and preparing for the upcoming IMO audit.

The Attorney General advised this bill was not suitable for public consultation but public education was certainly needed therefore it was agreed the Working Group, supported by the Chairman, would raise awareness via radio sessions. EDC felt they were unable to discuss the bill that day, as they needed to run through it clause by clause therefore members agreed a special meeting should be arranged for Thursday 10th December, with the Bill being presented to LegCo in early January 2021.

Action: Secretary

47.6 Economic Development Committee Self-Assessment Checklist – Measuring the Effectiveness of the Committee

EDC ran through and completed the checklist, that had been issued by Internal Audit. An issue arose regarding whether minutes were prepared and circulated promptly. Following discussion it was agreed to request a further amendment to the Council Committee Order, S8 (1), to extend the time for completing minutes to 14 working days. The checklist was signed by the Chairman to be forwarded to the Deputy Chief Secretary.

Action: Secretary

47.7 Confirmation of Open Minutes held on 15 September & 22 October 2020

The minutes of the open meetings held on 15th September and 22nd October 2020 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

47.8 Matters Arising

47.8.1 The Sugar Tax Review

EDC agreed an update on this item should be followed up in the New Year. The HPL later confirmed she intended to revisit this work this year.

Action: Health Promotion Lead/Senior Economist

47.8.2 Internal Audit Recommendations: Governance Review Council Committees

EDC had requested an amendment to the Council Committees (Rules of Procedure) Order, to amend the number of working days for papers to be circulated to a committee, to at least five. This matter would be followed up with the Deputy Chief Secretary.

Action: Deputy Chief Secretary

47.8.3 Options for the Re-supply of Chicks for Egg Production

The Director had reported there was no change to the current situation – Item Closed.

47.8.4 Port Regulations

Ongoing – the Deputy Financial Secretary advised he was trying to get some traction on this matter.

Action: Deputy Financial Secretary

47.8.5 Draft Policy for Communications Networks and Services, Memo

To be followed up with the Chief Economist on her return to the island.

Action: Chief Economist

47.8.6 Amendments to Fish Catch Limits Table, ENRPD Memo 8/2020 – Director ENRPD

The Director advised the Policy had been updated as a result of the three approved changes.

47.8.7 Company Registry Policy, Memo No 19/2020 – Chief Economist

To be followed up with the Chief Economist on her return to the island.

Action: Chief Economist

There being no further business, this session of the Agenda was concluded and the Committee moved to closed session.

Minutes Approved: 

Chairman

Date: 28-01-2021

