

Minutes of the Meeting of Executive Council held on Tuesday, 6th July 2021 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)
The Hon Acting Attorney General (Miss A M Hurley)
The Hon C G Buckley
The Hon C R Beard
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)

OPEN SESSION

110.1 Welcome

The Governor welcomed all to the meeting.

110.2 National Honours and Awards Bill, 2021 (ExCo Memo 39/2021)

The Chief Secretary introduced the Memorandum asking Council to consider and advise whether the National Honours and Awards Bill should be printed, published and presented as Government business at the next formal meeting of the Legislative Council.

The Chief Secretary provided Members with some additional background advising that an earlier version of the National Honours and Awards Bill had been presented to Legislative Council on the 30th May 2021 but this was defeated before reaching the Committee Stage. This was mainly because some Members of Council felt that the Badge of St Helena and the Freedom of the City of Jamestown Award should be open to all and not restricted by ones birth place or place of abode so this had been addressed in the revised version.

Members were content to support the National Honours and Awards Bill noting that it had been the wish of the majority of the Elected Members for the Awards to be made equal.

One Member though supportive queried whether some guidelines could also be issued on how these Awards would be bestowed and whether the Regulations could incorporate specifically the need for the Governor to frequently review the Honours Committee composition and that these names be published. The Acting Attorney General replied that this could be done under Section B of the Ordinance but might also be provided for in Regulations; she would refer this to the drafters for clarification.

(Action: Hon Acting Attorney General)

Another Member asked if this could also be independent of the Governor/Governor's Office and moved outside of the political arena; the Governor replied that he is independent in this matter as such awards should be given in recognition of achievements and should not become politicised, so political impartiality was essential.

Following discussion, Council advised and the Governor agreed, that the National Honours and Awards Bill should be printed, published and presented as Government business at the next formal meeting of the Legislative Council subject to the development of guidelines which sets out the criteria for awarding the Awards, that the membership of the Honours Committee was regularly reviewed and the Committee members' names published.

(Action: Clerk of Councils)

110.3 Appropriation Bill, 2021 (ExCo Memo 40/2021)

The Financial Secretary introduced the Memorandum asking Council to consider and advise whether the Appropriation Bill, 2021 should be printed, published and presented as Government business at the Legislative Council meeting to be held on 16th July 2021.

The Financial Secretary provided Members with additional background highlighting the figures behind financing the Budget. He explained that the proposed Government expenditure budget of £48.462 million and Schedule I and II of the Appropriation Bill will be funded by budgeted revenue of £47.273 million, which is made up of:

- a. Customs revenue of £5.393 million;
- b. Tax revenue of £5.67 million;
- c. FCDO Core Financial Aid of up to £26.79 million;
- d. FCDO immediate Conditional Call Down Funding of up to £1.0 million (with £1.0 million remaining);
- e. FCDO Financial Aid for Airport Operations of up to £3.0 million; and
- f. Other local revenue of £5.42 million.

The Financial Secretary clarified the provision regarding the Pensions and Benefits payments and concluded that this was a fairly good outcome for the Island in the circumstances stressing there would still be challenges for St Helena.

Members agreed that it was a reasonable budget settlement under the circumstances recognising also that there would be challenges for the Portfolios but were pleased to note that access to and from the Island would be maintained, funding was available for medical referrals and essential travel needs, also for an increase in the Income Related Benefits payments and the capital spend for essential works in the Community Care Centre (CCC).

Members requested that the final list of Technical Co-operation (TC) posts included in the budget be circulated to them; the Chief Secretary agreed.

(Action: Hon Chief Secretary)

A Member also requested that the list of items that had been agreed to be purchased for the CCC also be circulated; the Financial Secretary confirmed he would send this to Members.

(Action: Hon Financial Secretary)

Members raised various issues including the safety/fire controls at the CCC, the need for a suitable vehicle for the CCC that catered for more than one wheelchair, the implications that the late budget settlement brought, pointing out also that a yearly budget settlement was not ideal because it did not support forward planning, the need to also account for ongoing maintenance costs, whether the oxygen plant at Bradleys had been installed, tourism related matters and the positivity in concluding the transfer of the household allowance to the family allowance. Members considered also that it was disappointing that HMG had not provided additional funding for the introduction of a Ministerial form of Government, should the required Constitutional changes be approved.

The Financial Secretary (FS) advised that each client at the CCC had their own emergency evacuation plan, a business case would need to be submitted for the purchases of additional vehicles, an asset management framework was being developed which would also deal with ongoing maintenance and he also explained the procedural implications of the TC allocation pointing out that should the over programming come to fruition then this would result in an overspend. The Chief Secretary added that historically, the TC budget had been underspent.

Concerns expressed by one Member about achievement of revenue projections were noted by the FS who explained that this would be closely monitored throughout the year but it was hoped that revenue increases would be achieved through the planned Charter flights.

A Member asked about the TC underspend for 19/20; the Financial Secretary replied that he would provide a response on this.

(Action: Hon Financial Secretary)

Following discussion, Council advised and the Governor agreed, that the Appropriation Bill, 2021 should be printed, published and presented as Government business at the Legislative Council meeting to be held on 16th July 2021, subject to the proviso that the Technical Co-operation (TC) allocation list and the purchase list for the CCC be circulated to Members. The Financial Secretary stated that a Certificate of Urgency for the Bill to proceed would also be required.

(Action: Clerk of Councils)

110.4 Confirmation of the Open Session Minutes of the 1st June 2021

The Open Session Minutes of the meeting held on 1st June 2021 were confirmed.

110.5 Matters Arising from the Open Session Minutes of 1st June 2021

110.5.1 (105.5) Public Access to Government Information Bill, 2021 (ExCo Memo 31/2021)

The Hon Lawson Henry questioned whether the Guidance Booklet and the Regulations had been finalised; the Chief Secretary advised that she would obtain an update and circulate.

(Action: Hon Chief Secretary)

110.6 Confirmation of the Open Session Minutes of the 15th June 2021

The Open Session Minutes of the meeting held on 15th June 2021 were confirmed.

110.7 Matters Arising from the Open Session Minutes of 15th June 2021

There were no Matters arising from the Open Minutes of the 15th June 2021.

110.8 Confirmation of the Open Session Minutes of the 22nd June 2021

The Open Session Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd June 2021 were confirmed.

110.9 Matters Arising from the Open Session Minutes of 22nd June 2021

There were no Matters arising from the Open Minutes of the 22nd June 2021.

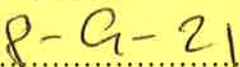
110.10 Any Other Business


110.10.1 Plans for HM Queen's Platinum Jubilee

The Head of Governor's Office informed Members of future plans for HM Queen's Platinum Jubilee on the 2nd June 2022 and inquired whether St Helena wished to participate by lighting some beacons. The Governor added that Ascension had also agreed to do this. Members were of the view that St Helena should participate and agreed that the Head of Governor's Office should discuss this further with the Chief Secretary.

(Action: Head of Governor's Office/Hon Chief Secretary)


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Acting Governor


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Date


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Clerk of Councils
08.09.21