

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL TOP LINES – TUESDAY 26 APRIL 2022

Living with SARS –CoV-2: developing a roadmap for St Helena (Phase 1)

Council endorsed:

- **The principle of developing a phased reduction in quarantine from 10 to seven to five days (or less) on medical risk-based advice of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and other relevant scientific information**
- **A reduction of the mandatory quarantine period from 10 to seven days for travellers who have been fully vaccinated – This will take effect from the next flight. The 10-day quarantine period will remain for unvaccinated travellers**
- **The removal of the requirement for Pre- Arrival Testing (PAT) for travellers from the next flight**
- **An extension of the current regulations the Public Health (Prevention of Formidable Diseases) (Coronavirus No. 2).**

At the meeting

- This is a first step towards returning to post-COVID normality. The approach will be based on a move and trial basis with continued emphasis on our preparedness to cope should the situation change (emergency planning has been ongoing for the past two and a half years)
- The public is reassured that all contingencies have been considered and a review of the Health Service is being undertaken that will inform next steps. This will be completed by the end of May 2022
- The Minister of Health was able to reassure Ministers that the Health Service is moving to a point of stabilisation i.e. critical staff resources in place, therapeutics and oxygen capacity
- Ministers acknowledged that while there is minimal risk to reducing the quarantine period, there will always be some risk
- Ministers also recognised the impact on the economy that quarantine has had and going forward recognised the need to focus on new revenue streams. They acknowledged the impact on local businesses especially the tourism sector
- Ministers noted the impact of long quarantine on people's Mental Health
- Testing and the removal of the requirement for pre-arrival testing 72 hours prior to boarding Airlink
 - (Testing on arrival – Lateral Flow Device Test [LFD] self-administered but assistance available if needed, PCR test to release on day 6)
- Ministers acknowledged the work that has gone into keeping our community safe thus far.

Proposed FY 2022/23 Minimum Wage Increase

Council agreed an increase of 12p per hour to the Minimum Wage which would take effect from 1 August 2022

At the meeting

- In January 2022, the Employment Rights Committee proposed a 12p increase to the hourly Minimum Wage. This increase reflects the rate of inflation over the past two years
- A 12p increase would raise the Minimum Wage to:
 - £3.37 per hour for all employees having attained the age of 18 years; and
 - £2.42 per hour for all employees having attained the age of 16 and 17 years
- The increase of 12p on the Minimum Wage has been recommended to strike a balance between the needs of those with the lowest incomes while not adding significant burden for business during this time of economic uncertainty
- While a 12p per hour increase is low to address these concerns, there was recognition that current economic circumstances limit the size of increase possible at this time
- After any change to the Minimum Wage is approved by Executive Council, businesses are given three months' notice to put in place measures to comply with the new Minimum Wage. This means that this change will take effect from 1 August 2022
- Ministers recognised that during consultations there has been a clear message that more ambitious increases to the Minimum Wage are needed to ensure that the lowest paying full-time job on St Helena is sufficient to achieve a socially acceptable standard of living
- This is supported by the conclusions of the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) review 2021, which found that the earnings required to sustain a socially acceptable standard of living exceed the current level of the Minimum Wage
- Ministers noted that in 2021 ExCo had approved the proposed Minimum Wage Policy, which sets a longer-term path to a more ambitious Minimum Wage, benefitting workers and providing adequate time for businesses to plan and adapt. This aims for a rate of £4 per hour during FY 2024/25.

Select Committees (Establishment) Order, 2022

Council approved the **Select Committees (Establishment) Order, 2022** to come into force on publication

At the meeting

- The primary role of scrutiny is to hold decision makers to account and to help improve public services by reviewing and challenging decisions taken by the Government
- In the local context, the St Helena Government (SHG) is the Ministerial Cabinet (CM and four Ministers) and the Scrutiny is carried out by the seven Backbenchers who are a part of the Legislature and **are not** the Government decision making body
- Locally there has been debate about whether scrutiny should be after the fact (that is once a policy has been implemented) or current (during the policy development stage). It is difficult to scrutinise a government policy or decision **before** it is taken or implemented, as in this case, the scrutiny could be seen as being a part of the decision making.

Example

People will be aware of the work of the Public Accounts Committee which **scrutinises the value for money - the economy, efficiency and effectiveness - of public spending** and generally holds the government and its civil servants to account for the delivery of public services. This scrutiny takes place **after the fact** and makes recommendations for improvement based on the outcomes of a particular policy implementation.

How it will work:

- Two select Committees have been established and between them they will scrutinise the work of the five portfolios:
 - (i) Health and Social Care; Education, Skills and Employment; Environment, Natural Resources and Planning;
 - (ii) Safety Security and Home Affairs; and Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.
- The Select Committees may compel any public officer to attend a committee meeting to give account of how a particular policy or legislation is being implemented. The Committee will reach a conclusion which could include making recommendations to the Legislative Council concerning the matter under scrutiny.

Backbenchers also have opportunities to feed into policy development at the front end of the process during their weekly informal meetings with Ministers, they can have bilateral meetings with Ministers at any time to discuss particular issues and they have regular opportunity to question Ministers during Ministers question time.

ExCo

26 April 2022