

ST. HELENA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE PRESIDENT

The Honourable John Gilbert Cranfield

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

The Honourable Chief Secretary	-	Mrs Susan O'Bey
The Honourable Financial Secretary	-	Mr Dax Richards
The Honourable Acting Attorney General	-	Ms Aine Hurley

ELECTED MEMBERS

The Honourable Clint Richard Beard
 The Honourable Gavin George Ellick
 The Honourable Jeffrey Robert Ellick
 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 Cruyff Gerard Buckley	-	Absent
The Honourable Corinda Sebastiana Stuart Essex	-	Overseas

CLERK OF COUNCILS

Miss Anita Legg

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Monday, 19th July, 2021

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

(The Honourable Speaker in the Chair)

ORDER OF THE DAY

1. **FORMAL ENTRY OF THE PRESIDENT**

2. **PRAYERS**
(Fr. Alan Williams)

3. **ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT**

Good morning, Honourable Members, ladies and gentlemen and radio listeners, welcome to this our second sitting of the twenty-sixth meeting of Legislative Council. My thanks once again are extended to Father Alan for giving us the benefit of prayer and to Mr Merlin George for his duties as Mace Bearer.

Honourable Members, the business before this House today is resumed debate on the Appropriation Bill 2021, a Motion for debate and the customary Adjournment Debate. I would once again to thank the Honourable Financial Secretary for his most informative Budget Speech which Honourable Members will now be given the opportunity to speak to. I wish you all well in your important deliberations on the Appropriation Bill and I will now call on the Clerk to announce the next item of business, please?

4. **MOTIONS**

Motion No. 1 – The Honourable Financial Secretary.

THE APPROPRIATION BILL, 2021

Resumed Debate

The Speaker –

Honourable Members, we will resume debate on the Appropriation Bill and I now put the question that the Appropriation Bill, 2021 be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the whole Council. The Motion is now open for debate. The Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise in support of this Motion, a Bill for an Ordinance, the Appropriation Ordinance, 2021 and would like to thank and congratulate the Financial Secretary on his Budget Speech. I would also like to thank Her Majesty's Government for the support given to us in the final settlement for our 2021/22 budget. Whilst I would have liked to have seen an inflationary increase to reflect the economic climate we face here on the island, this was not to be and we are therefore faced with a flatline budget and once more had to do a rollover budget to allow services to continue. Nevertheless, given the financial climate in the UK, we have been very fortunate and we should be grateful to have received the funding we did. I therefore thank Her Majesty's Government for this support.

As we have heard from the Financial Secretary, support was given in other areas too and, in particular, I would mention the Peaks Management Project, which is being funded over five years. This is a significant commitment by HMG at a time when Britain is facing huge financial challenges. HMG has also continued to provide financial support for continued access to the island whilst our regular air service had been suspended due to South Africa being red listed and the continued spread of Covid 19 there. As mentioned by the Financial Secretary, while the rest of the world had to contend with the challenges of Covid 19, we on St Helena have been very fortunate as our way of life has continued largely uninterrupted whilst the rest of the world have had to face the full force and the devastating consequences of the virus and have been in lockdown. Our success has been largely due to the stringent measures this Government put in place to protect the island. This, however, would not have been the case without the support from the whole community and for that I thank you all. I would like to make special mention to both the Government and the private sector and, indeed, the media for the role they played in support of keeping the island safe. I would wish to make special mention of our Health Service staff who played a significant role in ensuring we remain Covid free, their dedication and commitment during the past year has been exceptional. In my view, more should have been done and still could be done in giving personal recognition to some of those involved, both private sector and SHG.

The Financial Secretary made mention of progress made regarding the Sub Sea Fibre Optic Cable and the benefits that could be derived from that for the community, both social and economic. Alongside this, the new Communication and Networks Policy, endorsed by the Economic Development Committee, as planned and will provide the framework in drafting of the new Telecommunications legislation which will enable the establishment of a new Regulatory Authority in preparation for the new Telecommunications Licence.

2021 Population Census could not have been undertaken at a better time, in my view. It has provided the evidence to support what we all knew was the situation regarding our working age numbers, which have decreased, while the number of those aged over 65 have seen a marked increase. Mr Speaker, this trend to our shrinking working population cannot be allowed to continue, we must place our best endeavours in attracting working age Saints to return to the island, we must value those who have already returned, especially those young Saints who have returned with degree level or equivalent qualifications, we need to do all

within our means to ensure that they are remunerated at a level which recognises their qualifications and which allow them to have a standard of living that means they can afford to have their own homes here, that they have the opportunity to upskill as and when necessary through continued professional development and that, above all, they are respected for the knowledge they have gained from their exposure abroad. Continuing the pay disparity is not an option for going forward and it is, I have to say, a root cause as to why we have lost and continue to lose young Saint Helenians who hold international qualifications. Like the Financial Secretary, I believe we need to do more to encourage young people of working age with the skills we need to come to the island to live and work, and, importantly, to increase our shrinking tax base. As we were reminded, when we had additional workers here during the construction of the airport, this made a significant difference to our tax base, therefore, we should not be afraid of growing our population as it will help to grow our economy.

Career Access St Helena, CASH, will have a significant role to play, especially in preparing our young people for work and attracting young Saints families back to the island. Again, support for this initiative is being considered through a number of options. This is good news and I look forward to seeing these options being developed further.

It is also pleasing that we have been able to continue to support young people by providing additional funding for tertiary education and that a further eight students can go off to University. However, at this time, only SHG is contributing to developing our young people and I believe that the private sector has a role to play here and to contribute financially to the ever-rising costs of sending our young people to University. SHG's own state-owned entities should likewise be making a contribution.

This Government is again providing significant funding to a number of NGOs and have done so for many years, even with a flatline budget. In my view, not sufficient recognition is given to the important role that these NGOs play in our small community and the fact that SHG is able to make these contributions.

The other aspect and worrying trend arising from the Census will be our ability as an island community and Government is how we make provision for and care for the many elderly people in our community and institutions. A recent visit to the Community Care Centre by elected members was an eye opener to say the least. I am pleased that provision has been made in this budget to tackle some of the many issues highlighted by our visit. This will not, however, be the end, there are many other issues that need attention and will require further finance; therefore, this must be considered in future budget discussions in the next budget cycle. Critically too is the number of elderly living at home, some in Government Landlord houses, some in private accommodation, that will likewise require from time to time adaptations to these homes to suit their needs as they age and become less independent. It has been a priority of this Government to do all that is possible to allow the elderly to remain in their homes as opposed to institutions for as long as they are able and it is safe to do so. We must, however, make adequate financial provision when it comes to carrying out some of the basic adaptations that these properties require from time to time to keep the occupants safe. This, like the lack of appropriate facilities and equipment in our institutions can become a liability to SHG and a contingent one to HMG if left unattended. I therefore urge the Financial Secretary to ensure that there are appropriate policies in place that will ensure action is taken in a timely manner when situations arise.

I hope too that with regard to the Pensions and Benefits that a long-awaited legislative change to the status of household to family will be achieved in this Council's term to protect the vulnerable and others who have been impacted since the introduction of this law in 2011. What is concerning too is the ever-rising cost of the Basic Island Pension Scheme and it is already, in my view, unaffordable and is not sustainable in going forward. We need to urgently consider the criteria for qualifying for a Basic Island Pension so that the limited financial resources can

be targeted towards the neediest. SHG must prioritise the work needed to create a national insurance contribution scheme. It has taken too long already and unless we prioritise the work needed to implement this scheme, making contributions compulsory, then SHG will forevermore be faced with the rising costs of the Basic Island Pension as life expectancy levels continue to rise.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the Financial Secretary and his team for their hard work and diligence in bringing this budget before the House. I fully support the Appropriation Bill, 2021 and commend it to the House. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much indeed. Any other Member wishes to speak? The Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, it was good to hear the Budget Speech at last, it did take some time and it seems like the trend is increasing, I hope this will not be the case. Thanks go out to the Financial Secretary and his team, preparation and number crunching can't be easy at times. Also, to the elected members from 2017 when joining Council to now, it seems we have also adjusted and made sure we scrutinise whatever information we have. The Finance Committee, although I am Chair, I believe this Committee was really good to have in place to allow for another level of financial scrutiny, so it does work and it needs to continue no matter what governance system is in place. Financial management and governance should and will need to be top of the agenda going forward as things seem to get tougher in the community and our roles become every more challenging, but at the centre should be and must be our community and locals as this is what will pull us through any situation. It is proven, so why change the dynamic? Local employment and opportunities will form the base of a recovery plan. I see, it might not be what others see.

The Covid pandemic has caused havoc and continues to do so. Our reliance on the outside world is still there so belief in support of local trade and supply of commodities is much needed and will turn our finances to stay on island rather than be transferred of, employment included, which is one of our major exports. Locals with skills need to be given the opportunity and not just be in jobs of training all the time. For far too long we have been reliant, that needs to stop. Appreciation for our local employees needs to happen and equitable remuneration cannot be always the excuse of work in progress, but this needs to get over the line or we will lose a much-needed younger generation and a real tax base that is needed in this community as other places offer greater opportunity.

Mr Speaker, the talk is Government does not support businesses, it does. The proof is 91 businesses and over 400K, so four hundred thousand pounds. Mr Speaker, I asked the Financial Secretary to please make public who has received support, be it through the Covid funding or ESH grants, so the public can see how these funds are spent and how much support Government really provides, put this misconception to bed. As the Financial Secretary said in his speech, we are putting all our eggs in one basket with the hopes pinned on tourism. We know the provision of over £5m is great, but we need to be realistic, we need another successful industry to boost revenues. I for one ask myself is the cable this revenue. This island can have for at least ten years, ten years, and beyond that and in that time other work can happen and the private sector will start up and run more businesses. The Governor said private sector should have a more business footprint as Government clearly takes the lead at the moment. I only see Government as delivering services and a core focus on that. Governments around the world battle to operate in the business aspects and on St Helena it is no different, we need to provide

services and not run businesses. Progress to date and what seems to be going well is the cable project, it was up to recently on track, it seems to have a few months delay, but this might be good to make sure we have our house in order and we create the best possible outcome for when the cable is switched on.

Unqualified audit, that is great and shows all that scrutiny and working together works and look what has been achieved.

Housing seems to be moving along and achieving the aspirations we hoped for, we need plots and houses so, again, we are progressing and delivering.

The EDIP Programme has allowed for some micro projects in the mix and this has provided for this community and has also allowed for the private sector to tap into this. Examples are toilet refits, school covered area, pavements and the hospital covered area.

Education and the real driver I see for this island is still on track. Although sometimes limited resources; the hard work of our teachers and students and the work the students put in the proof is there, we will just need to keep on track and close monitoring. You heard a Motion to research single primary school, this is all the plans that will need to be looked at to enable a skilled community.

Mr Speaker, Members, we know we use a process called MTEF, Medium Term Expenditure Framework, like it or not we use this. I think we need to improve on this as some information is readily available and others take long to get to all elected members, let's improve this process.

In the period we had ESH, now we have a sustainable team and the hope is they will use the good processes to enable everyone to invest and become a conduit for assistance and my hope is that they will have a impact in our economic vibrancy and that is much needed.

Mr Speaker, the financial situation is so that we now have a 66p to every pound supplied by FCDO. We need to appreciate what we do get. And also, just to mention that sometimes, when looking at the Budget Speech, the flatline settlement really means a reduction when we look at inflation and other pressures the island faces, so we have to be appreciative but we need other streams of revenue as well.

Focus areas for the coming year will be how we deal with the ageing population and the departing of so many from the island. The ideal response would be to make sure we appreciate, again, our local workforce and pay a reasonable and appropriate hourly rate to keep people here and we need vesting in our population, make sure we use them in the areas of study and give the opportunity and not block them, they need to progress and be looked after. There's an increase in the over sixty-five-year olds, so now it is time to ascertain forward thinking and planning, no use to wait for the happenings to overtake us, get plans in place. We have now put some funds aside to do and improve those who reside at the CCC, be it furniture, maintenance and some other urgent requirements. One of the good things in the process and throughout this has been the wishes from elected members.

The strength we do have, is again, we are Covid free, the weakness, we are way too reliant on the outside world. The opportunities, local initiatives and self-sustainability, the threats, trying to stabilise the economy, a budget is just a method of worrying before you spend money as well as afterwards.

Mr Speaker, all the figures put in perspective where we really are. FCDO £26.9m, the call-down of £1m, airport operations are £3m, Customs revenue £5.4m, Tax revenues £5.7m, other local revenue including recharges £5.4m, there's also £1.2m from the Consolidated Fund. Revenues to me will be the difficult aspect, Customs and Tax. This will only be seen this financial year as whatever the pandemic has really caused, so expectations of the increase for these lines and achieving this will be very challenging and there will be need to keep a close eye on these. Health is still at the forefront and Government still supports this heavily and makes sure appropriate care is given. There is also heavy subsidy in medication and other

elements. Treasury and Infrastructure and Sustainable Development also has a chunk of funds some £14.5m and this needed and hopefully will be used to create a more economically sustainable St Helena for the future. Access, I also see this remit and I think we also had extra flights from the UK. At one stage we were told flights from the UK could not happen, look now what's happening every six weeks.

Education have an allocation of £3.8m; this increase has taken into account CASH, Careers Access St Helena. Also, once more as a Government, we have committed to the Scholarship funding and this is a true show that collectively we still strive to improve opportunities through academic studies. To advise there are other ways to gain opportunities, likewise like work experience, apprenticeship, scholarship and we also need to look at vocational studies and CASH which will hopefully be an avenue of assistance.

Mr Speaker, almost there. Just to say the focus I have is on local employment and improved, equitable conditions, a very hard look at the pay disparities and to get this sorted, focus on another industry, tourism cannot be our only focus and saving grace, making sure the Fit for the Future delivers its outcomes to the employer and employees, private sector having more involvement in our economy, listen to our local knowledge and adapt ideas to make sure we take and consider what might work, they are the ones doing the work, sometimes it's not the thinking, but rather just common sense approach; keeping the island safe and looking at sensible approaches when suggestions of opening up is made. We also need to focus on our national goals, altogether safer, altogether healthier, altogether better for children and young people, altogether greener and altogether wealthier. Leadership is not a choice, leadership is a choice, it's not a position, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, St Helena is our home, we need to treasure and protect and make sure all our community is looked after, we need to provide clear and transparent approaches and decisions and always take and get the community to trust us.

Mr Speaker, I do ask for the Financial Secretary to put in the public domain how Government supports the private sector and also how and who ESH supported up and until the closure.

Mr Speaker, I support the budget and the hard work that has been put into getting the numbers balanced. The responsible thing now is to allow the Directorates to use the allocated budgets and, of course, as always, making sure appropriate spending happens to allow for better service and not just business as usual as mentioned in the Budget Speech. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you. The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Appropriation Bill, 2021 and commend the Financial Secretary for his comprehensive delivery on Friday of last week.

Mr Speaker, once again we have experienced a delay in our budget allocation with a rollover budget, almost four months into our financial year. Nevertheless, we are extremely grateful to Her Majesty's Government for providing aid settlement in the tune of a flatline budget given the fact of Covid-19 and the many challenges and setbacks the British Government has had to face. One can say we had a reasonable grant-in-aid settlement. Through partnership working and as the world settles in trying to cope and manage the challenges of Covid-19, St Helena Government should strive and continue their efforts in working with Her Majesty's Government to try and achieve a multi budget aid settlement of at least three years. This will provide more certainty around spending and allow the Government to prepare and plan in advance.

Mr Speaker, we can be grateful for over the past year and more we continue to be Covid free where residents have been allowed to continue enjoying their normal lifestyle. This has been

down to proper planning and making the right decisions and all involved should be commended.

Through EDF 11 funding, Mr Speaker, we have seen work commence for our fibre optic cable and through the EDF funding work has commenced at Ruperts for our cargo operations, including small type projects which will benefit the community. What has also been encouraging to see, personal achievements and development of our local staff in key sectors; teachers achieving qualifications, nurses achieving top nursing degrees and stepping up to the plate in taking over management and leadership roles within our Health Service. This will go some way in our strive to become less reliant on Technical Cooperation Support Officers in going forward.

An achievement for this Council is recognising the difficulties and hardship many of our people have been experiencing who have to rely on Income Related Benefits with no other form of income and in cases where they live in a household with other income earners those income earners have had to provide for those persons who did not qualify for Income Related Benefits. The Council has given this high priority and found a budget allocation to accommodate this change where eligibility criteria will change to allow such persons to receive their benefits in their own right and in moving this process forward I give credit to Councillor Green for his efforts in seeing that this change to the relevant legislation is made before this Council is dissolved.

Mr Speaker, in going forward, there will continue to be many challenges as a result of Brexit exit. Together with other Overseas Territories, St Helena will stand to lose EDF funding, funding of which we have really stand to benefit from over the years in major type projects such as Rockfall Protection, road networks etc. The British Government has continued to maintain its similar type funding will be identified to replace the loss of EDF funding and our Government must continue to keep this on the front burner and continue to make the case at the highest level. We have many major projects which will benefit our island, purpose-built Prison, new Hospital, additional accommodation for our elderly, leading on from Councillor Leo, a primary school for our children and the list goes on and on.

Mr Speaker, we have been able to continue to maintain access and we have been able to deliver some certainty for flights up until the end of this financial year, which is good for the travelling public in terms of planning. Our medical referrals and essential equipment and with the recent outbreak of violence in South Africa, it is real worrying and challenging times and I can say that our Health Service is in close liaison with the service provider, MSO, who are closely monitoring the safety and wellbeing of our people who are on medical referrals in Pretoria.

It is also pleasing to see prompt action taken following my Motion in the last formal sitting where £150,000 has been made available for essential, emergency equipment for the Community Care Complex.

Our scholarship students continue to make good progress with their technical studies through university and we have seen some good examples of some who have recently returned and I hope that these young people will take on leadership roles and responsibilities within our community.

The Children and Adult Services continue to be a challenge with the demand for the service forever increasing with our ageing population and the aim for people to remain in their homes as long as they possibly can. The budget needs to be maintained in order to deliver such essential services.

As we value and grow our local staff, they need to be really valued in order to retain their services and like I've alluded to Mr Speaker, we've seen really good examples. However, pay and grading needs to be addressed. I am aware that the Chief Secretary is carrying out an exercise now on pay and grading and I hope that this exercise will be completed in time for the next year budget negotiations.

Mr Speaker, I will end by acknowledging the hard work carried out by the Finance Department, I am aware that they have many days and long hours and months and also the Directors in getting our budget together, I will have no hesitation in giving my support to the Appropriation Bill, 2021. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much indeed. The Honourable Tony Green?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Mr Speaker, it's been a year with unprecedented uncertainties due to the pandemic, while some things never change, like having another rollover budget. The settlement from UK when it did arrive was in the circumstances as much as could be expected. UK's financial situation and the fact that we have £2m projected underspend from last year makes the settlement very reasonable. These two factors will no doubt be at play when planning for next year. Nevertheless, financially, society has taken a hit, particularly some parts of the private sector. It's pure conjecture now, had the monitoring and forecasting provided more certainty, as we are now left wondering if anything more could have been done with what we had available. I thought before Covid entered the scene we were about to start on improving our economic situation that would at last finally start the transformation through air access as had been originally planned. The fact that some £400,000 was used to support some 91 businesses provided some support even if it still leaving those slightly afloat if in a lifebelt. However, the most important thing is that we have until now remained Covid free and it's an unbelievable privilege to have been able to practically live a normal life during this past year. Money has been spent on getting the island prepared as the virus can strike at any time and we really must express our sincere thanks to all who have worked hard and made it possible and also to put in contingency plans should the situation change. We now have an oxygen plant on the island and it needs to be up and running without any unnecessary delay even though it seems to be costing more than we anticipated.

It was interesting to hear that while we had 2,150 less arrivals for tourism or leisure last year that taxes and duties were up by around £200,000. This is no surprise to me as for years those who have made the biggest contribution to our island's economy has been visiting or returning Saints who at the same time contributed to a high percentage of our own residents owning their own house. Our economy though cannot grow sufficiently without increasing the resident population. With 4,439 people on island on Census night, it showed a slight decline on previous years, but a key factor is that the increasing percentage of elderly population and the decreasing percentage of the age group that can be economically active, important statistics is telling us where our money should be spent and the difficulty of increasing the tax base. This balance needs to change, and quickly, we need more people and we need more investment, including from outside, yet when investment opportunities are discussed and situations exist to boost the economy, policies designed to increase the population, I can't help feeling that the rhetoric and addressing the real needs are some way apart. The economy needs people, people are needed to support the vulnerable and having a bigger resident population has to be a top priority. At the same time, everything possible needs to be done towards retaining the economically active. We also need to attract back our own Saints so that we automatically have our own brand and retain our own culture.

We heard in the Budget Speech that there are 217 recipients of Income Related Benefits and 783 in receipt of Basic Island Pension which means that 990 are in receipt of benefits, let's say 1,000, which represents about 22½% of the population, getting very close to a quarter. The Census also records that a quarter of the population is aged 65 or over. These figures give justification to our health and social care dominate budget expenditure. Extra support in the

budget is also for assistance to the CCC. I've had the good fortune of being involved from a policy and political oversight position of Social Care. I take the opportunity to sincerely thank the Directorate and every single member of staff for their valuable work over the past four years.

One of the biggest problems my Social and Community Development Committee face, and, indeed, what we inherited four years ago, was that caused by the definition of 'household' in our Social Security Ordinance. If our budget is approved today, the work through the Committee and particularly the Working Group will finally make significant improvements from here on and for years to come. There is money available in the draft budget to change the definition of 'household' to 'family' and will benefit a lot of people with our benefits.

The island also looks forward to benefits that the new fibre optic cable should bring. Good communications is important, whether electronic means, by air or by sea, all three are equally important. Air access can hopefully move forward in frequency as we improve systems and practices during hopefully a diminishing pandemic and as has been shown flights to and from the UK are possible. A thought while preparing this response is why can't our ship make a few trips north; the destination south does have a few issues.

Returning to the cable made possible through EU funding, we really must show extreme appreciation to the European Union, not only by providing funding for the cable, but the massive contribution it has made over many years to many projects. They have also contributed to projects on Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. In addition to funding, I know personally of the support and interest shown by Brussels towards St Helena. Although we were small, they understood our needs and did everything possible within their rules to assist. Thank you, EU, and hopefully ways can be found to tap into sources of support in the years to come.

Mention was made on Friday about EDIP programme which sometimes we refer to as our Capital Programme. I'm sure others will and have comment on this contribution to improvement to the island and the benefits to business. Our recurrent budget this year is £48.5m, with a sizeable contribution from the UK Government for which we are grateful. The year ahead and those beyond could possibly be very much influenced by how the world copes and deals with Covid. For the island, the political scene could change as hopefully soon we'll hear whether or not we have a ministerial system of government to lead us into the future. This leaves me to thank all those involved in the preparation of the budget settlement and thanks to the Financial Secretary for delivering possibly his last budget speech. Thank you, Mr Speaker, I support the budget.

The Speaker –

Thank you. The Honourable Russell Yon?

The Hon. Russell Yon –

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise in support of the Appropriation Bill 2021/22. Mr Speaker, I would first like to take this opportunity to thank the Financial Secretary and his team plus Directors and Portfolio leads on completing the proposed budget. This was not an easy task I'm sure with all the to'ing and fro'ing to get the sums corrected to make this final submission. Thanks also to the UK Government for the budget, although it being a flatline budget, but under the financial strains of the UK Government and the impact of the Covid pandemic this was more or less to be expected.

Again, Mr Speaker, the process, especially for the one-year settlement, will have serious impacts on how Portfolios will have in the planning of their approved budgets. One-year budgets, although accepted, has become a norm, even though the FCDO budget team has always stipulated that they would rather like to approve a longer budget aid support for the Island. Most of all, a three-year settlement would be more advantageous to SHG in projecting

future works and to spread spending for certain projects over a three-year period which would allow more to be done year by year instead of trying to complete projects in one year because of budget restrictions. We still can't get this right, Mr Speaker, but it is not for the want of asking.

Mr Speaker, spending will need to be monitored more closely by Portfolios in future so that we do not have large underspends. This do not bode well with FCDO when we are trying to get an uplift in our budget for the forthcoming year when we can't spend what we have and yet some Portfolios are looking for additional money to spend. It is almost a slap in the face of elected members to sit here year on year debating budget allocations and making cuts here and there for Portfolios than to not spend their allocated figure.

Mr Speaker, the Financial Secretary in his Budget Speech made reference to the positives that have been achieved over the past year and I will say that there have been a lot of success stories that have been accounted for. I will not repeat these successes, but would like to add my congratulations to all involved in delivering these.

Again this year there will be shortfalls in some of the spends allocated to some Portfolios and although some of us around this table would like to see more funds allocated to the Health, Social and Adult Care of the Island because of the needs within our ageing population we must also be mindful that if this approach was to be adapted then there would be other areas within other Portfolios that underpin these services that would be seriously affected.

Mr Speaker, it might be time to rethink how SHG support and subsidise NGOs and other bodies. Across the horizon, Mr Speaker, I believe that this Island and the Government should be looking at the form that the UK Government is now allocating their funds and it won't get easier to call upon Her Majesty's Government for additional funds in future even though they have an obligation to fund and support its Overseas Territories. The times are changing and it will become necessary to look for other streams of revenue in the future. More should be done about keeping more money on the Island, we should be producing more through farming. The recent potato production is sheer proof that we can be more productive and with an increase in local products the benefits will be felt on island as produce will become cheaper and healthier. We need to do more with our farming and hopefully farmers will benefit from having a rotation system in place so that all farmers will not plant cabbage and carrots at the same time and also experiment with different vegetables. More should be done to preserve our products so that we don't have to import considerable amounts of frozen products. Some years ago, I was appalled to see cans of onion and tomato gravy on the shop shelves and just recently I was just as appalled to see packets of frozen mashed potato in a shop freezer. Do we need to be going down this road? Mr Speaker, arable farmers need to be encouraged also to manage their livestock better and to increase the volume of products for the market. This Government must do more in supporting those farmers and look at innovative ways as to how we can better manage and produce our products. More forestry products should be readily available on island to avoid having to import fencing posts and decking planks etc, new treatment systems for timber are available and should be investigated. Over £800,000 is spent importing bottled water to the island. This is a very good business that should be explored locally and will not only result in keeping the majority of that money on the island, but also reducing the plastic waste going into the landfill and therefore expanding the life of the landfill. All of the above are examples which will assist in generating jobs, rejuvenating our economy and retain a lot of money on island. This, in turn, will increase the local spending power and generate the much-needed revenue.

A few months ago, Councillor Jeffrey Ellick did an excellent presentation on the advantages of having a hemp farm or hemp planted throughout the island, the possibilities of exporting the hemp products and the revenue it would generate and although SHG officials and members from the Governor's Office were present, nothing more has been received from the follow-up

work they were to undertake. This would have been an ideal project to investigate the present pros and cons. This was not the first time this was discussed in this current Council as Councillor Kylie Hercules was also proactive about this during her tenure and I myself delved into this on several occasions but did not continue or provide the information as was provided by Councillor Ellick.

Mr Speaker, to generate large sums of revenue for this Island we must be thinking outside of the box as we have limited resources to our disposal. We have seen at this time of Covid 19 that we cannot rely on tourism alone and neither can we depend on our local population to forever being subjected to increased fees or new taxes as there is only so much they can take. Now is the opportunity to look at alternative developments and to grow our revenue-based productions.

Mr Speaker, the arrival of the fibre optic cable this year will give strength to our wavering economy and fingers crossed will see more people opt to come here to set up and work or become working nomads. The cable has the potential to grow our economy, but we, as people, must also change our mindset to welcome these changes that it will also bring.

One project that was to have the potential to deliver a better way of life and contribute to our economy enormously would have been the Renewable Energy Project. Even though we would not have seen the decrease in our electricity from the get go, it would have enabled the Utilities Provider to set the path for a cost per unit decrease within the next two or three years and this in turn would enable larger growth within our current businesses and would encourage other businesses to develop or come to our shore. Our electricity costs is astronomical and we did all in our powers to address this situation. It is a shame that the Power Purchase Agreement signed with the Sustainable Energy 1 Limited, a subsidiary of PASH Global, is currently under review given a number of proposed amendments put forward by the PASH team. The CEO of PASH, Mr Paul Smith, expressed his excitement of undertaking this project and had high hopes and visions of developing even further when he was on the island last. However, this progress is now halted and I for one hope that it can be advanced to enable this project to be completed. St Helena has a Renewable Energy Strategy and it would be a shame if we cannot meet the projected timelines.

Finally, Mr Speaker, the old lady still continues to shout for more money and if nothing is done about this soon then SHG will be opening itself to other forms of litigation. Mr Speaker, I have dabbled on about this in recent years and it will always remain close to my heart.

Mr Speaker, our infrastructure, and I mean our roads and buildings, is in need for a dire uplift. The Roads budget is again a mere £400,000 and £600,000 is for Building Maintenance. The Island's Road infrastructure is continually crumbling before our eyes and we are only approaching this in a reactive way, repairing potholes for the past fifteen years has left our roads now being prone to every aspect of wear and tear. The majority of the island roads need to be rehabilitated with new drainage, reconstructed parapet walls, safety railings and road signage. Even though some funding was allocated some years ago for some maintenance, work now within the funding to upkeep this work now seems that these roads falls to the same system as we have in place. Some £20m will be needed to oversee work on our road infrastructure alone and the longer we leave it the costlier it will get. Likewise, other SHG buildings, Mr Speaker, they too are fast becoming depleted, a lick of paint won't even make them smile, they are exhausted that even our new buildings, let alone our historical infrastructure is about to crumble. Take a look at the airport buildings, new infrastructure, but no maintenance money and you will only have to see what is happening. The corrosion has set in, a coat of paint is needed. Likewise, Prince Andrew School is in dire need of maintenance. Again, we are reactive to the issues because of the budget restrictions and the longer we leave it the more money is needed.

Mr Speaker, we can't get blood out of stone and with the budget allocation from the UK Government and from revenues raised here on island, we will and cannot meet the demand, therefore a change of heart is needed on how we operate. We must allow businesses to set up here on the island and most of all we must encourage our Saints to be at the forefront of this development. We must increase our population. The recent statistics are not in favour of this topic at the moment, so we should do more to encourage our population growth, but most of all, Mr Speaker, we must look at the best suitable ways that we can get back to some normality to this island, otherwise we might remain Covid free, but we will be eventually become doomed. Mr Speaker, I support the Appropriation Bill 2021/22 and beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you. The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, firstly, I would like to congratulate the Honourable Financial Secretary for his Budget Speech which he has indicated may be his last. I would also like to convey my thanks to the Treasury staff for their dedicated work in compiling this budget. Yet again it is disappointing that we have a rollover budget, going forward there is hope that St Helena Government will secure a multi-year financial aid programme. Mr Speaker, I have lost count of the amount of times that this has been said in this House. I'm in doubt that the proposed ministerial system will deliver the desired outcome if a multi-year settlement is not achieved. At the end of this four-year term, it is evident that if the island is to move forward successfully from the various issues that has been experienced and still experiencing these cannot be solved with a piecemeal approach. In my opinion, the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the United Kingdom and St Helena Government in December 2010 has not delivered what it set out to do; for the island to be self-financing, connected with the airport, inward investment and tourism. I do recognise that there has been a shift from inward to local investment, but it appears, Mr Speaker, that this profess is not complete as members of the private sector are still struggling to progress their investment. Apart from these local matters, which I have highlighted, we have the added external influences to deal with here on St Helena; Covid 19, the UK Government leaving the EU as we know as Brexit, the impact of climate change and the supply of essential commodities, which potentially will only get worse. For a number of years, the two main sources of income for St Helena has been Saints from overseas employment and the British aid. Are the policies implemented as a result of the Memorandum of Understanding in December 2010 causing a divide in this community? Are the young people and those with families leaving the island because of these policies? The recent Social Impact Assessment of the way the economy is developing in St Helena implies that it is being shaped by the visitor economy, not the projected high-end budget tourists, but friends and family of people on island. Mr Speaker, my view remains unchanged since last year when I responded to the Financial Secretary's budget Speech. To undertake a real change and lay foundations for the future of our island, it is important to have a complete, independent, holistic review of all the various aspects of development for the island.

Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I rise in response to the Honourable Financial Secretary's Budget Speech. First of all, I would like to thank the Financial Secretary, his team and all who played a part in putting together the budget for this financial year. I would also like to extend thanks to the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office for agreeing a flatline budget for St Helena. I think that all around this table were pleased with and welcomed such news, taking into account what was happening in the UK and the world economy as a result of the global pandemic, especially the announcement that the UK was making a significant cut in foreign aid. I think all of us were bracing for a cut to the budget. Mr Speaker, I would like to emphasise as an island we should be truly grateful for the financial aid provided by the UK Government for this year in light of all that had occurred over the past year.

Mr Speaker, I agree with the Financial Secretary when he said this budget sets the foundation for recovery, out of adversity comes opportunity and we cannot continue to do what we have always done. Yes, we must evolve with the times, but these are words, we now need action. No longer can the Government of St Helena just talk the talk, we need the Government to talk the talk and walk the walk, I very much doubt that next year the UK Government will be as generous as they were this year, therefore we need to make the best of what we have been given.

My Honourable Colleague also went on to acknowledge the positive outcomes that we have achieved in these difficult times, especially with Covid. Yes, we are Covid free and yes, I join him in thanking all those who contributed to this huge success which shows what can be achieved through collaboration and working together. Mr Speaker, my Honourable Colleague is very diplomatic and measured, unlike me, therefore, I would just like to add we had those who did not agree and were truly passionate about what measures should be in place when it came to Covid, they did not work in collaboration, but in opposition, I being one of them, but that is what our Constitution provides us, the freedom to express and challenge and that what gives balance and by God what balance we have here today, a Covid free St Helena, so let's celebrate that too. There are more successes my Honourable Colleague highlighted and I also join him in acknowledging those successes and would like to just touch on a few, particularly successes with the cable thus far. The cable will provide unbelievable opportunities for the future, but it will be down to us, the people of St Helena, to seize the opportunities. The Population and Housing Census and the report from this in comparison to former Census, this will be a vital tool to inform the new Government on how St Helena should move forward socially and economically. For those achieving degrees, other qualifications and the localisation of the Theatre Sister post, this demonstrates that the public sector is moving in the right direction of succession planning and may this continue. Social care continues to develop its community offer outside of residential care. This is so important, especially with our ageing demographic and for the future years as this will assist with future demands and constraints, more importantly, reduce the institutionalisation of elderly and allow them to stay in their own environment for longer.

SHG achieved an unqualified audit opinion on its annual financial statements for the year 31st March 2020 for the first time since the adoption of accruals accounting and the IPSAS framework, I'd like to say well done to the Financial Secretary and his team on such an achievement.

Moving on to the budget process and expenditure. I will repeat myself like I did last year and say what I have always been saying. We need to decide what are the core functions of SHG, what are we gonna do and what we are not going to do. The tough decisions should have been made within this budget round and we should have been paving the way for the new government, however, it will be for the new government to make the tough decisions. We have constrained essential services despite our ailing infrastructure and the increased demand on

health and social care. The increase in some Directorates' budgets are merely inflationary or some non-core activities have had little or no cuts. Money from the Covid funding you will find later was allocated to the Health budget for the Oxygen Machine, hence the Health budget looking healthy. As you might guess, I am not happy with everything, but we have to take responsibility and ensure that business continues.

Mr Speaker, I will end on a positive. I am particularly pleased with the funding in relation to the policy change of moving 'household' to 'family'. At one point, I thought some Members would have not pushed this over the line, but they stood their ground and a lot of people on St Helena will be better off as a result of this, so well done, Members.

Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you. The Honourable Cyril Leo?

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, in a recent letter to elected members, Lord Ahmad, Minister for Overseas Territories, wrote: 'This is an exceptional year where the UK is dealing with a pandemic and an economic downturn.'

The United Kingdom has serious economic difficulties and challenges at home. So overwhelming are these difficulties and challenges, that the United Kingdom has been forced to seriously reduce Britain's foreign aid budget; knowing that reducing the foreign aid budget will have a negative impact on some of the world's most poorest people.

Fortunately, the United Kingdom has kindly provided some 65% of the St Helena Government's recurrent budget for this financial year. Obviously, a flat line budget will mean some of SHG's social, infrastructure and economic objectives required modifying accordingly. Metaphorically speaking, the size of the financial loaf available, really decides the size and the number of financial slices that can be obtained. However, the recurrent budget settlement from the UK should be considered a very good outcome for St Helena given the current economic climate in the United Kingdom.

The following extracts are from a recent letter to elected members from Lord Ahmad, Minister for Overseas Territories: 'This is an exceptional year where the UK, alongside the rest of the world, is dealing with a pandemic and an economic downturn.' The Minister wrote: 'The seismic impact of the pandemic on the UK economy has forced the government to take tough but necessary decisions on spending. The UK Government contribution to the St Helena budget has now been finalised. St Helena, he said, has retained UK contributions at similar levels to the previous financial year.' And he goes on, 'This is a strong signal of UK Government's continued commitment to the people of St Helena and particularly against a backdrop of reductions in the UK aid budget.'

Mr Speaker, this is an unprecedented period of financial, social and economic challenges for the people of St Helena. I would like to acknowledge the good work carried out by SHG officials and officers in shaping the 2021/22 recurrent budget to satisfy the priority objectives of elected members. One of those objectives was to correct a ten-year-old anomaly in the Social Security Ordinance by changing the definition of the "household" status; the ongoing funding required to support the change will be significant. However, with reference to the 1.1% saving target purposely achieved by each Directorate, consequently, we are assured or reassured by the Financial Secretary that there will be mitigating options available to SHG if there are unbudgeted demands on the provision of public services.

I also commend the Honourable Financial Secretary for his far reaching and all-encompassing budget speech on a budget that we can manage and work with.

Mr Speaker, on behalf of the people of St Helena, I will take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to the UK taxpayers, the UK Government, Lord Ahmad and the FCDO, especially in this period of unprecedented economic challenges, for the level of sustained financial aid provided to St Helena. Therefore, I see no reason to reject the 2021/22 Recurrent Budget. I support this Bill. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much indeed. The Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Thank you, Sir, I support this Motion. What I didn't see in the Budget Speech was a substantive pay rise by our employees, after all, we saved two point something million, so I can't see why we don't have a good pay rise. We been taking care of our youngsters, we been doing one little bit for them, but we still paying them peanuts, you know, they come back, they got all these things and we aint paying them, so, for me, we need to do something about that. To attract our Saints back we need to up our game, you know what I mean, give them some kind of incentive to return. Last time when Basil Read was here we had lot of people, but rents went up, everything went up, but nothing more, so for me, if we are to move forward in this island and get anything we need to directly put money into those services what we really need to and plus look after our people. Sir, I beg to move. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you. I think everyone has spoken, so the Honourable Mover, you may wish to respond to the debate?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Members for their very helpful contributions to the debate this morning. If it's okay, Mr Speaker, I won't respond individually to Members, but I think there were some key areas and questions that came out of those responses and the first one was really around the policy areas and policy choices for this Government going forward. So, first of all, for Councillor Russell Yon, I just want to give you some reassurance, you raised the issue around the ongoing maintenance of the Government Estate and also the road network as well as part of that Estate and just to let you know that we are actually working on a comprehensive Asset Management Framework which we hope to have in place this year to look as to how we address the ongoing needs and requirements for the whole of the Government Estate as well as our other types of assets, like our heritage assets, to make sure that we could find a way of maintaining those over the long term.

Telecommunications has been mentioned quite a lot here and I just wanted to also bring to Members attention that the Telecommunications first draft of that legislation has now been produced by the Attorney General's Chambers so we hope in the not too distant future we'll be able to discuss the first draft or the revised draft Telecommunications Ordinance taking into consideration the Telecommunications Policy that was approved in late 2020.

Much talk has been around needing to maintain and ensure that our staff are recognised here on St Helena and I think quite a few Members actually talked about the requirement to ensure that there's basically fair pay amongst the different facets of our public service and on the island in general and I just want to reiterate there that also some of the elected members will be aware of the Pay Policy Review that is being undertaken at this point in time. I think

Councillor Beard had mentioned previously in a different setting around the setup of the new Remuneration Committee that will be looking at remuneration across the piece for the Public Service, but I also want to reiterate if whilst we have these policies in place or they will come onto line, we need to make sure that we are able to allocate sufficient resources to be able to fund those initiatives and that will require the support of all elected members to make sure that there is sufficient funding available for those key areas.

Also, Councillor Thomas mentioned about the National Contributory Scheme and we would have liked to have progressed that a lot further and I know that was very high on your agenda as well as Councillor Henry, but we do appreciate there is a lot of work involved in that, as you will have heard from the conversations that we've had over the last two years at least and beyond that, we need to link this into the Pensions piece and Councillor Henry quite rightly talked about the affordability of Basic Island Pension and I think that is an ongoing serious issue for us in terms of public finances on the island to make sure that we have a way of addressing that and ensuring going forward also that it's means tested as well, so there's a lot of work to be done there.

I'd like to reiterate some of the thanks that was made in the responses from elected members. Firstly, Tony Green, in terms of the support from the EU. Again, you know, the funding that we get from the European Union for those key programmes that we've been able to invest in over the last twenty years is quite a substantial additional fiscal stimulus for the island and the cable has the potential, as we've heard from all of the Members here today, has the potential to be transformational for St Helena and that wouldn't have happened without the EU and also Her Majesty's Government who obviously makes a contribution into the EU at that time, so I also would like to reiterate our thanks to the EU and their team.

Councillor Beard mentioned specifically around the need for continuous strong financial management and I fully agree with those sentiments. We've made quite a lot of progress over the last couple of years in improving our public financial management, however, there is still more to go and in terms of the overall governance for this Government, it is absolutely important that we maintain strong financial management at the core, but also within our Portfolio Directorates as well, so we welcome that.

Councillor Yon also talked about having to look beyond what we're doing at the moment and I fully agree entirely Councillor Yon on that. As I mentioned in the Budget Speech, we will be doing a Sustainable Economic Development Plan refresh and looking at ways to increase our import substitution, and, again, fully support all of those comments that was mentioned earlier on that. The work on the Hemp actually has been progressed quite a lot, Councillor Yon, just that I don't think it's been back to the Committee yet to discuss the next steps, but I know our Economists have been working on that as a potential opportunity.

Just in closing, Mr Speaker, I'd also like to say that, reiterate the idea around we'd love to have a three-year settlement for this Government going forward. In terms of planning, it makes it a lot easier for us to be planning on a long-term basis rather than on a year to year basis. The budget this year, the Pink Book, actually has a three-year budget in it, which is a good step in the right direction again, however, years two and three of the Pink Book, as you know, is still unfunded until we have discussions later in the year with Her Majesty's Government around a new three-year or possibly longer potential settlement, so we would really like to be in that position, although we've said that now for the last how many years that I've been Financial Secretary, so let's hope that we are able to progress that and with the new ministerial form of government, there's an opportunity, they're having discussions there as well from Minister to Minister to be able to progress that as a possibility.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I just want to reiterate again what some of the Members have said and that is really around our ageing demographic and the need for us to be able to attract our working age population back to St Helena and increasing that working age population. I really

do think this is a big challenge for this Government over the years to come and we do have a lot to do to be able to make sure that we can encourage and retain our local community. So, Mr Speaker, with your permission, I would now ask if we can go into the detailed stages of the Bill to be considered at Committee stage. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Members, I put the question that the Appropriation Bill 2021 be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the whole Council.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Mover?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the Council do resolve itself into a Committee to consider the detailed provisions of the Bill.

The Speaker –

Do we have a seconder, please?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you.

Question that the Council resolves into a Committee, put and agreed to.

Council in Committee.

The Chairman –

Okay, Honourable Members, before we commence, the Honourable Cruyff Buckley is missing this morning and I had no apologies from him this morning and neither did the Clerk have any apology, so I don’t know if something’s wrong or the reason for him not to attend this morning, but I will pursue this after the meeting to see what really happened to him this morning.

Right, Honourable Members, a reminder that as this is an Appropriation Bill, the Schedules are considered before the Clauses and that special rules of procedure are set out in Standing Order 13, Rule 2. Are you inviting the Deputy?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I would like to ask if the Deputy Financial Secretary could join us at the table and also, where appropriate, Mr Speaker, we have the Directors within the room, they will be able to help along with the Chairs any responses to any specific questions that elected members might have in their areas.

The Chairman –

Okay, thank you.

So, we'll begin with Schedule I, Recurrent Expenditure and we'll start with Head 12 – Central Support Services, standing in the sum of £1,277m. Deputy Financial Secretary?

Mr Nicholas Yon (Deputy Financial Secretary) –

Thank you, Mr Chair. So, it might be helpful if Members wanted to also refer to the Estimates Book, the Pink Book, and as we go through each line, I can give you the page reference, so this particular one you'll find on Page 37 of the Pink Book. This particular budget line has provision for the Central Support Service and this makes up part of the Central Support Service Portfolio. Within this particular budget line there's a funding for the Administration of the Governor's Office and Plantation House, the Management and Administration Section, Information Services, Public and National Affairs and then Support to Executive and Legislative Councils, Public Relations and Corporate Policy and Planning.

The Chairman –

Are there any questions, Honourable Members? The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Just for the listening public, I would ask if the Deputy Financial Secretary will expand on the line in relation to supporting Executive and Legislative Councils, because what is in front of me for 2021/22 is £412k which is an increase to the previous year of £321k, so just for the listening public if you could elaborate on that figure?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Yes, so, included in this particular line is all of the expenses for Council. The change or the increase from the previous financial year to this financial year is in the main an estimate of the additional costs that might be required to implement a new system of governance and so that makes up the majority, the other smaller element of that is the cost of elections that will take place this financial year.

The Chairman –

Go ahead, the Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. So, if I can ask the Deputy Financial Secretary to say what costs, because you said the majority of it is for the proposed ministerial system, but how much are we talking about?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Yes, so that would be something like just over £70k additional to what's already in the budget for costs, so it would include remuneration, any allowances, any costs, administration costs etc.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. So, Mr Chairman, will the Deputy Financial Secretary indicate included in this cost would be any administrative secretarial support to the individuals for instance, for example, if the ministerial system does come into play, support to Ministers, is that included in this figure or is that funding captured under Management and Administration, because I don't see any increase in that area, but, of course, I am aware that the Fit for the

Future Programme is undergoing so there might be movement from that exercise with staff or move out of the current roles and support Ministers, I don't know, so I am asking for myself on this occasion and the listening public?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Yes, so within the budget as it currently stands will be the costs as it currently stands for the support that is already provided to Council and then as part of the Fit for the Future Programme whatever the outcome of that process is that the budget will be adjusted later for any additional support that might be provided, so the additional support isn't in there at the moment.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

So what you're saying is that the total line will not increase, but there might be a movement around the separate cost code numbers or whatever you're talking about if it needs to be moved? Is that what you're saying?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Yes, there will be some movement, but because we'd be operating a central service, you might not necessarily see individual posts within the various Heads of Expenditure, but there'd be a central budget and that service will be provided centrally out to the different areas and it's the same kind of model that we will use for the finance-related activities.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

Could I just add to that, just to confirm that there will be additional support, additional administrative support allocated to the new government system, so it's actually within the Administration, and just to confirm your question, Ministers will have that additional support.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Okay, so my question was then, in a nutshell, the figure of £412k does not include the additional admin support, it's allocated in the £1.277m somewhere, but it will be moved around. Okay, thank you for that clarification. May I continue, Mr Chairman?

The Chairman –

Yes, go ahead.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

So, Mr Chairman, I recall recently that we implemented a policy about access to information, St Helena Government Information, which was well supported, but I notice in the Information Services that there is a reduction in the finance for this particular section, so I would like to ask is that because we have now implemented this policy where members of the public has access to retrieving information, St Helena Government information, but the budget line for that particular service has dropped, so I'm concerned that if you got a policy agreed but we're not gonna have the resources of finance in that section to carry out that policy?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Yes, so that particular line decreased because we moved the post that was originally in there to a different Head of Expenditure, but in terms of funding to support that particular policy change, there is already provision resources there that are available to help support that and

then there also will be other resources that we will be drawing upon from the other service areas, depending on where the particular question would come from, so it might not be here in the central budget here, but it could be, you know, time and resources from another particular Directorate Head of Expenditure, but it might be the case that as things are implemented it might change in the future, depending on demand and what type of request might come forward.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
So, Mr Chairman, if I can continue.

The Chairman –
Yes, you may.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
What you were saying, in a nutshell, is although we will have this policy in place, if members of the public does put an application to access information from St Helena Government, there won't be a response to say, sorry, but I'm unable to do that because we don't have the finances and resources to do it because there's been a reduction in that subhead, that's not likely to happen?

Mr Nicholas Yon –
No, well, they shouldn't provide that kind of response, they should be, kind of, they should be addressing those particular issues at the time and then internally we'd have to make sure that resources are available to meet our, you know, legislative obligations.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
Thank you. May I continue, Mr Chairman?

The Chairman –
Yes, you may continue.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
So, I notice also, Mr Chairman, that there is a reduction in the Corporate Policy and Planning budget line so if you can give an explanation for that as well, please?

Mr Nicholas Yon –
Yes, so this particular line, previously we had funding allocated for CASH under this particular budget line and that has been moved from here to Head 22 – Education and Skills and Employment where that service will now sit. In addition to that, there was funding also allocated for the Census for last year and there isn't any planned Census for this year, so, again, that budget line has been reduced.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
Thank you, Mr Chairman, but we can address Head 22 when we come to it. Thank you.

The Chairman –
Thank you. Any other Member have any questions? The Honourable Jeffrey Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you, Mr Chair. Would you be able to tell me about Public Relations, the increase of £30k?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Yes, so the increase in this particular budget line, there's two posts, so there's the temporary post to support under Covid 19 Response, all of the publications, then there's also the post of Digital Media Officer under our Sustainable Development Plan and then there's also advertising costs associated with the Covid 19 Response has been allocated here for this year.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Jeffrey Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you for that.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Are there any other questions?

Head 12 – Central Support Service - £1,277m

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

We'll move on to Head 13 – Human Resources and Organisational Development, standing in the amount of £8,811m. Deputy Financial Secretary?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. So, the detail, additional information can be found on Page 38 of the Pink Book and here we have three areas of output under this particular Head. This Head forms part of the Central Support Service Portfolio and here we have the Human Resource Services, which is basically the day to day management and running of the Human Resource Service. Then we have Technical Cooperation Posts, which are separately budgeted for here and then Overseas Training or Central Training Budget that's held for SHG staff members, so together they make up the Head 13 – Human Resources and Organisational Development.

The Chairman –

Any questions on Head 13, Honourable Members? The Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Perhaps I could ask if the increase in Technical Cooperation be explained, please?

The Chairman –

Honourable Deputy Financial Secretary?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Yes, so that increase is a specific post for the Company Registry function. When the Sustainable Development budget was put together, part of that budget that was agreed was an allocation for the Company Registrar, kind of, development role for that particular service as a

new revenue stream, so that has been included here under the TC posts budget line to make sure that it comes under the right management and administration structure.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. So, that increase of £94k that is for one post only?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

So, it would be for the post and any associated costs.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

So, one post?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Yes, and recruitment costs, all those kind of..

The Hon. Clint Beard –

All associated costs?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

All associated costs, yes.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Is it possible to tell me, or to tell us, the increase of £94k, how many posts does that number consist of?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

It consists of that one post.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

No, not the one post, I'm talking about the full amount.

Mr Nicholas Yon –

94?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

No, the 8.3.

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Oh, sorry.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

He wants to know the number of TC posts.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

That's right, 8.3, tell the public what posts, the number.

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Yes, so that would be for 112 posts.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you.

The Chairman –

Any other questions from Honourable Members?

Head 13 – Human Resources and Organisational Development - £8,811m

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Then we'll move on to Head 14 – Attorney General's Chambers, standing in the amount of £1115k. Deputy Financial Secretary?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. So, the additional information can be found on Page 39 of the Pink Book. Basically, Head 14 is a new head in comparison to the previous financial years. Previously the administration costs of the Attorney General's Chambers has been included under Head 12, which was previously Corporate Support, Policy and Planning. What we've done this year is to try and separate out the Attorney General's Chambers from the Central Support Service to make it a lot more transparent in terms of the expenditure for the AG's Chambers, so these costs here basically are the costs for the management/administration of that function, so it sits in £115k.

The Chairman –

Any questions, Honourable Members?

Head 14 – Attorney General's Chambers - £115k

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

We move on to Head 15 – Safety, Security and Home Affairs, standing in the amount of £2,451m. Deputy Financial Secretary?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. So, this can be found on Page 40 of the Budget Book. This particular Head, Head 15 encompasses all of the different services under the new Portfolio – Safety, Security and Home Affairs. There's a number of different outputs or cost centres associated with this particular Head, so there's the, kind of, general management and administration of the Portfolio, there's the Fire and Rescue Service, Police Operations, the operations of H M Prison, Police Investigations and Public Protection, Immigration, Emergency Planning, Sea Rescue Service, the Contact Centre, here moved, that was previously under Corporate Finance, the old structure, now has Customs and Port Management under this particular Head and also now includes Maritime Compliance as a separate output under this area. We also have revenues that are collected under here, particularly for licensing and immigration fees as well for this particular area of service.

The Chairman –
The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –
Thank you, Mr Chairman. Can I ask why is there an increase under H M Prison from £333k to £366k?

Mr Nicholas Yon –
Yes, so under this particular area is the increase in relation to food provisions budget.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –
Okay, and as you mention it, Mr Chairman, when you talk about revenues, has revenues been included for the services that the Fire and Sea Rescue Services carry out, er, you'll be aware that I've been asking that for a number of years and it has always slipped, but has it been incorporated this time round?

Mr Nicholas Yon –
Yes, so we have revenue here budgeted at £8k under Fire and Rescue.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –
So, how they propose to arrive at the £8k, that hasn't been to the relevant committee yet? I'm not aware.

Mr Nicholas Yon –
So, here you would have that budget as an estimate of what they would want to do and then obviously they will need to progress that through the relevant committee where that's appropriate.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –
So when will that likely to come to the relevant committee for endorsement?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
We don't have that detail here for you today, Councillor Thomas, but we can find out and let the elected members know.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –
Thank you.

The Chairman –
Councillor Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –
Thank you, Mr Chair. Can we have an explanation for the Contact Centre and the £25k increase there?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Mr Speaker, sorry, I just realised also we don't have the Acting Chief of Police, so can I ask, with your permission can we suspend for ten minutes and I will try to get the relevant Officer here?

The Chairman –

Okay. Honourable Members, we will suspend the sitting for ten minutes, we'll come back again at five minutes to twelve.

Council Suspended.

Council Resumed.

Resumed Debate – The Appropriation Bill 2021/22

The Chairman –

Welcome back, Honourable Members and whilst we were on lunch break, I made some enquiries as to the Honourable Cruyff Buckley, but unfortunately, we can't get a hold of him. I got in touch with his brother Jaie Jaie and he said he would try and get him, but up to now we haven't heard anything from him, so I'm not sure what has happened. It's unusual he didn't ring in if he was sick, to ring in to say he couldn't make it, so we'll just have to continue without him at the moment. Okay?

Right, we will resume debate on Head 15 – Safety, Security and Home Affairs.

Mr Nicholas Yon –

I think when we left, Councillor Ellick asked what were the details behind the increase in the Contact Centre budget line, £25k, and there are two reasons for the increase. One is the Otrix licence fee that we would normally pay for access to that system and the second part is increase in telecommunications costs for the Cost Centre itself, so those are the two areas where additional cost pressures have been experienced in this financial year.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Jeffrey Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you, Chairman.

The Chairman –

Any other questions for Head 15, Honourable Members? The Honourable Russell Yon?

The Hon. Russell Yon –

Thank you, Mr Chair. Port Management, can we have some input on the increase for the Port Management, please?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

So, under Port Management, the biggest cost here is for repairs and maintenance to the ferry boat and also some additional safety elements for the wharf itself.

The Hon. Russell Yon –

Thank you.

The Chairman –

Any other questions, Honourable Members?

Head 15 – Safety, Security and Home Affairs - £2,451m

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

We'll move on to Head 16 – Judicial Services, standing in the amount of £130k.

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. So, the page in the Pink Book is Page 41 and it details Head 16 – Judicial Services. There's one area of output of business for this particular Head which is Justice Administration, so the Administration costs associated with the Courts on St Helena and that is in the amount of £130k and that previously was included under what was Corporate Support, Policy and Planning, but under the new structure we have separated this out very much like the Attorney General's Chambers, separate to Central Support Service Portfolio.

The Chairman –

Any questions, Honourable Members? The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Deputy Financial Secretary, I was expecting a decrease in this subhead and the reason for that is for a number of years we talked about the Justice of Peace with the review of going forward that the cost would not be included for anyone to be accompanied, because I can remember when we asked that two years straight and the figure in that, in the budget, included the accompanying of other individuals, so has that subhead been reduced now

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Yes, so the current contract has come to an end, what was under the previous budget and then the new terms, these recommendations that have gone forward and those new terms will be taken into account for the new contract.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

So there hasn't been any adjustment to the budget line

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Not for this stage, but whatever the new terms that are agreed, then we'll only process what those new terms are.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Honourable Members, any other questions?

Head 16 – Judicial Services - £130k

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Head 17 – Treasury, standing in the amount of £4,127m. Deputy Financial Secretary?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. So, Head 17 – The Treasury. Treasury was previously what was Corporate Finance. This particular Head now forms part of the Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development Portfolio. There are some cost centres that have moved, as I previously stated when we discussed the Safety, Security and Home Affairs budget, like Port Management and Customs that have moved out from here and gone into that particular Portfolio. The relevant page is Page 42 of the Pink Book and under here we have areas of output for the Treasury are the Management of Social Security, Revenue Services, the Central Finance, Post and Customer Services Centre, Payments on behalf of the Crown, which holds a number of central budgets, Corporate Procurement Services, there is an amount here for Fish Processing and then there's the, what was previously showing here civil contingency line, but you can see that it is zero in this financial year, so overall those particular areas have been allocated by output for expenditure. In addition to that, the revenues under this particular area collects a good proportion of the island's revenues and it includes under here the financial aid and also income taxes and Customs duties as well, so you will see that there is also quite a amount of revenue allocated under this particular Head.

The Chairman –

Any questions, Honourable Members? The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. So, will the, for the benefit of the listeners, I should say, will the Deputy Financial Secretary give us a breakdown of the £3m for Payment on behalf of the Crown?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Yes. So, under here would be all of the costs associated with Public Sector pensions, so under the new Pension Scheme, which is the Defined Contribution Pension Scheme, here we hold all of the contributions for the staff members who are on that Scheme, so that comes under this budget. There is a budget here called Other Employee Costs where we hold a central pot of funding for any changes that may take place during the year for salaries or adjustments to salaries, increments, redundancies, any of those kind of costs are held in that central Other Employee Costs budget line under this Cost Centre. It some furniture and equipment for the Fisheries Processing Plant, that has been agreed includes as an investment in that Plant in Ruperts. Included in here are things like Investment Management fees for all of our investments that Treasury holds. Included in here are payments to other agencies, bodies and persons, so that would include organisations like Public Solicitor's Office, the Media Services, Connect St Helena, Equality and Human Rights Commission and also other miscellaneous grants that may be included. Funding is included in here for St Helena Hotel Development and also for the Legal Assistance Fund. This budget also holds amounts for the Swimming Pool contract and also for the Public Transport system. We also include under here an estimate or provision for compensation and for any legal fees that might occur in the year as a central budget that is held and we also include under here transfers to other reserves, so we make a contribution to the Internal Audit Trading Account for their services within SHG and also a contribution to the IT Trading Account for the capital investment and replacement programme for IT equipment. Included in here is also the contract for Standard and Pause who do our credit rating for the Island and that's that contract fee included in here and also is the Cleaning Service Contracts that we have in place is also included under Payments on behalf of the Crown and, finally, there's Audit fees that we have for St Helena Audit Service that we pay to do all

of our external audits, value for money audits and their support to the Public Accounts Committee, so all of those different areas are covered under this particular budget, Payments on behalf of the Crown.

The Chairman –

Go ahead, the Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Chairman and thank you Deputy Financial Secretary to be giving the area, but I was looking for the actual detail for the listening public, so, for instance, when you talk about other employees costs, are you talking about £1m out of the £3m is allocated for that? When you talk about investment management or audit fees, could you, you have to be mindful that the listening public may not have access to this detail. You did mention all different non-government organisations, so if, Mr Chairman, if we could bear with us so that the Deputy Financial Secretary say exactly what amounts has been allocated for the benefit of our listeners?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

Yes, so I can go through those particular amounts. So, start from the top again, so the Public Sector Pensions, which is the Defined Contribution Pension Scheme, contributions for employees is in the amount of £764k; Other employee costs which I explained was the, kind of, central amount we hold for any other employee costs that might crop up in the year, is £132k; the Furniture and Equipment allocated for the Fish Processing Plant is £40k and that is of a non-capital nature, so they would be amounts, small purchases of furniture and equipment; we then have a contribution towards the cost of the Fibre link that we use to operate from Caernarvon Court down to the Castle, so that's £49k; we have Investment Management Fees that we pay of £36k; the Public Solicitor's Office proposed £76k; for Media Services - £33k; the Swimming Pool Contract is at this moment budgeted at £86k, but those contract costs will be aligned with the actual contract payments as they come due; the Public Transport System, at the moment that is budgeted as a provision for £73k, very similar to the Swimming Pool contract, will be based on the actual contract payments that need to be made under that contract; the Contribution towards subsidy for Connect St Helena is £353k; Equality and Human Rights Commission, allocation £75k and the Legal Assistance Fund - £30k. The St Helena Hotel Development Ltd contribution and subsidy is in the budget at £200k. I can also provide a little more detail in terms of the Miscellaneous grants and/or subsidies that are provided, so, for example, there's SHAPE, allocation proposed at £78k; New Horizons at £55k; St Helena Heritage Society at £19k; Creative St Helena at £31k; National Trust at £43k and Disabled Persons Aid Society £1500 and a contract to the upkeep of St Paul's Cemetery of £10k. We then also have Compensation and Legal Fees at the amount of £98k as a provision as and when things arise in the year and the transfers between reserves for internal audit and the IT Section is £290k. The contract amount put in for Standard and Pause is £70k and the Cleaning Contract is in at £330k and, finally, the Audit Fees for, like I explained, External Audit fees, St Helena Audit Service is £240k.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Deputy Financial Secretary. Mr Chairman, I hope that was very beneficial to our listeners, I know it was quite tedious for us here sitting in the Chamber for you to go through that detail, but I hope it has been appreciated by the listening public as to say how much money, funding, the St Helena Government is supporting other organisations out there. So, may I continue, Mr Chairman?

The Chairman –
Yes, you may.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
Can you advise, Deputy Financial Secretary, the £56k you mentioned for fish processing, what does that, how is that made up?

Mr Nicholas Yon –
£56k?

The Chairman –
Fish Processing.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
Back to the Pink Book, sorry, Deputy Financial Secretary.

Mr Nicholas Yon –
Oh, yes, so the output in terms of that area is in relation to the operating costs of the Fish Processing Plant for the first three months of this financial year while it was still being operated under SHG.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
Okay, thank you for that. And my final question, Mr Chairman, if I may, I notice that there is a reduction in the Post and Customer Centre, it's not no intention of reducing the service, is there?

Mr Nicholas Yon –
So, there is no intention in terms of the day to day running of the organisation. What this reflects is that as part of the process, I think it was mentioned earlier today about finding 1.1% saving within all of the different Portfolio budgets, and what we've done is reduced the number of stamp issues that we will undertake this year in an effort to come in within that budget, that ceiling that was allocated.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
Thank you, Mr Chairman.

The Chairman –
Thank you. The Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –
Mr Speaker, thank you. Could I ask, please, what does St Helena Government get out of the £70k that we're spending on Standard and Pause visit and is that value for money?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Mr Speaker, if I can add, this is the, Standard and Pause is the triple B rating, which is what all investors look at when they come to St Helena in terms of the Island's credit rating and that was actually endorsed, Councillor, by your Committee, I believe.

The Chairman –

Thank you. The Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you, Sir. Just a question around the furniture of £40k, can you elaborate a bit further on that, is that beyond the, up to £0.5m or?

Mr Nicholas Yon –

No, so that, it's within the £0.5m, but what we've done is, we had to spit out the big capital items as separate to the small kind of bits of furniture that might be purchased, so if there's a desk, for example, that they need to buy then that would be included in Furniture and Equipment rather than actual capital allocation, but it is within the overall £500k allocation.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you.

The Chairman –

Anyone else have any questions?

Head 17 – Treasury, £4,127m

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Moving on to Head 19 – Sustainable Development, standing in the amount of 538k. The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. So, under Head 19, Sustainable Development, there are three outputs for expenditure. These are Economic Development, the Visitor Information Service and the Marketing Team. Mr Speaker, as a bit of way of background, previously we had the Economic Development, which was Head 19, that was where the funding was allocated for Enterprise St Helena at the time. Members will be aware that on completion of the project at the end of 31st March 2021, Enterprise St Helena came to an end and as a result of that the option that was agreed was to establish a new Sustainable Development team within the St Helena Government's budget under the Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development Portfolio, so this is funding or the budget that is now being allocated directly for the Sustainable Development team.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Any questions, Honourable Members?

Head 19 – Sustainable Development, £538k

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Head 21 – Access, standing in the amount of £7093m. The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Under Head 21 – Access, there are three outputs for expenditure, one being the Shipping, the next being Civil Aviation, which is what used to be the old Access Office and then Airport Operations. So, under this Head of Expenditure, Mr Speaker, now we also include the expenditure for the cost of maintaining access to and from St Helena and that falls under the Civil Aviation output of expenditure where you can see for this year, we estimated in total £3.78m. Also, in terms of the airport operations that was previously the £3.5m budget that's set outside of the Access, but that is essentially for expenditure at the airport for SHAL and you'll see in this year also that has reduced from £3.5m down to £2.8m in this year.

The Chairman –

Okay. Honourable Members, any questions? The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Under Shipping we've got £500k, can you explain what that is for?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

So, that is for the cost, or the Government absorbs the cost of moving the containers between Ruperts into Jamestown, we're hopeful, obviously, when Ruperts becomes fully operational that that subsidy will fall away.

The Chairman –

Any other questions, the Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

So, could you probably explain, Financial Secretary, where the expenditure is for the ongoing airport operations left over from the actual contract of building the airport, because there's still some operations going on?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Yes, so they are, sits under the Civil Aviation budget line, Councillor Henry, so this is for what used to be the Access Office, as you know, that's been significantly reduced down now and that amounts of funding is actually sitting under the Civil Aviation budget line.

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you. So, some members of the public have expressed concerns about the level of transport that is being used, particularly home to duty, and I'm just wondering what sort of oversight we're having on this particular operation at this moment in time?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

So, we have, at the moment we still have a Project Manager who is responsible from St Helena's perspective, actually we have two Project Managers who are looking at and overseeing the operations of the team that is currently used at the moment to oversee the maintenance, because at the moment that is virtually all they're doing in terms of, er, the team in Ruperts is doing a maintenance function on the existing infrastructure that is there and, in particular, the Bulk Fuel Installation, so there is a Project Manager who oversees that and you will probably have seen recently there's an advert that's also gone out for an additional Site Manager.

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Okay, thank you for that explanation. Now, my understanding is, the majority, if not all the people in SHG and probably other organisations on the island, pay for home to duty transport, is that the case with this sector?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Off the top of my head I am not entirely sure, but I can definitely check and let elected members know.

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you.

The Chairman –

Any other questions, Honourable Members?

Head 21 – Access - £7.093m

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

We'll move on to Head 22 – Education, Skills and Employment, standing in the amount of £3,849m. The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, at this stage, the Chair of the Education Committee would also like to make a few comments.

The Chairman –

Okay.

The Hon. Clint Beard (Chairman, Education Committee) –

So, just a brief summary. I think the total is £3.849m and basically it's to get our priorities, we're looking at our Portfolio priorities, which is to improve educational outcomes and operate an inclusive system that meets holistic needs of all children, to meet academic training and development needs of the people of St Helena, to provide opportunity for all young people to fulfil their career aspirations. So, within the Directorate, we have local leadership and they prevail to have the necessary understanding of the needs of the community. We still strive to create and progress on attainment and that's what we're trying to do, we have the training elements within our staff as well as the new initiative of CASH, which will fall under Education, but we also have the opportunities of the scholarships as well as apprenticeships. We also try to improve within all the schools, so we've had replacing of some windows and a covered area as well for the inclement weather, we also allowing for more opportunities within the apprenticeship scheme because the Committee agreed to a flat rate for all apprentices.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Anything further, Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Just to possibly add, in terms of the biggest changes in the budget and I mentioned it in the exposition in terms of the budget speech on Friday was the school bus service is now also been

included back into the Education budget and that is actually under the expenditure output head of Education Standard Support.

The Chairman –

Okay, any questions, Honourable Members?

Head 22 – Education, Skills and Employment, £3.849m –

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Head 23 – Health, standing in the amount of £6,104m. The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Again, Mr Chair, I think on this occasion I think the Honourable Chair of Public Health.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas (Chairman, Public Health Services) –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. The funding allocated for Health, £6,104m, is designed to deliver the Health Strategic Plan and achieve Key Performance Indicators and to build on the work that the Health has currently in place. I will say that during the year the Health Directorate continued to be fully committed and has worked extremely hard with planning and preparedness of Covid 19; there's been 97% of our population been vaccinated, which is a, it's a good success for the Island and I know staff has worked extremely hard, but there's been challenging times during the period under review, because the previous Director had left suddenly in August and I will say that Janet Lawrence from Air Access stepped in at very short notice and, you know, we were in the process of difficult times and she stood up to the challenge and did extremely well with a high level of commitment, so credit to Janet. We now have a new Portfolio Director for Health and Children and Adult Services and we look forward, we've had a number of meetings and the new Portfolio seem to bring a wealth of experience. What we have progressed is the Tobacco legislation and regulations and Members will know that Tobacco legislation was approved last year, the regulations will come into effect from this year and everything will go live from January. The Health Service is grateful for the EDIP funding for the Acute Mental Health Unit, that is in place and that will serve to benefit the Island and you will know that there has been achievements with our Nurses, there's Nurses are continuously working to receive the key competencies, two Nurses have achieved a top level Nursing Degree, we've seen the return of a UK qualified Biomedical Scientist to work in the Laboratory and the localisation of a Theatre Sister Nurse and furthermore a member of staff has stood up to the challenge and took over management of the General Hospital. Under the Oncology side of it, there's two local Nurses doing a degree, two-year degree, to be able to learn some of the skills and take on some responsibilities and that is good for the Island. We are looking for the second Oncology Nurse and I know Members were very supportive of that and there is ways that the Chief Secretary alluded to that that still may be able to happen. We're also looking at the car park in the Maldivia Road under this EDIP funding and I know that Councillor Russell Yon, who is a member of the Committee, has been doing a lot of ground work and that will really benefit the Hospital in getting the vehicles congested away from the General Hospital in the event of emergencies. What also went well recently was the local

campaign on recruitment and, again, that was carried out by local staff with a great level of success.

The overseas medical referrals remains to be a challenge because of the not being able to send our patients on a regular basis to South Africa and it's even worse with the unfortunate recent violence in South Africa, but I'll have to say that local staff here have worked extremely hard and sometimes late into the night trying to make arrangements at short notice and should be commended for that, but also Kedell Worboys, our UK representative, has done extremely well in making arrangements and taking care of the welfare of our medical patients, so the special funding for the Covid, Members will know we've got the Oxygen Plant and plans are in place now to have that installed, so the Health Services are on a good pathway for development and especially with the achievements of local staff and dedicated staff. Thank you.

The Chairman –

Thank you.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Sorry, also the budget will allow for some essential equipment, medical equipment that the Health Service urgently needs.

The Chairman –

Okay. Financial Secretary, anything further?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Just maybe useful for the listening public, Mr Speaker, just to cover what expenditures or what outputs are covered under the Health Directorate, so the first is the Management and Administration sections, then there's the Local Medical Services, Overseas Medicals, so that includes the medical evacuations and medical referrals, Hospital and Acute Care, the Community Care, the Dental Section, Environmental Health, Laboratory and then there's a new output of expenditure which is the Covid 19 Response and this budget line includes the funding for the operations of Bradleys and the associated testing and arrangements that's in place for that and then, finally, the Mental Health, Mr Chairman.

The Chairman –

Okay, thank you. The Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker. My Honourable Friend to the right mentioned about the purchase of the Oxygen Plant, can you tell us, for the benefit of the listening public, when is it anticipated that this investment will be operational, please?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Mr Chairman, I can say that the Health Directorate is working closely with the Engineer in ENRD, Chris Peters, and they're soon to be able to deliver a timeframe, a plan, of when this Oxygen Plant can be operational and once that information is available, I know the Director is working on it, it will be shared with members of the public and elected members.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –
Thank you.

The Chairman –
Thank you. Any other Member have any questions on Health?

Head 23 – Health, £6,104m

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –
We move on to Head 26 – Environment, Natural Resources and Planning, standing in the amount of £1,793m. The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Under Head 26, we have a number of outputs. These include the Forestry Production and Services, Tree Surgery, Forest Establishment, Maintenance Protection, Fisheries Administration, Production and Policy Advice, Biosecurity Services, Agricultural Support, Grounds Maintenance, Planning and Building Control, the Upkeep of Public Facilities and Areas, Environmental Assessment and Advisory, Nature Conservation and Terrestrial, Nature Conservation Marine, Waste Management and Landscape, Ecology and Mitigation Programme.

The Chairman –
Thank you. The Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –
Thank you, Mr Chairman. May I ask if the Upkeep of Public Facilities and Areas includes a regular maintenance of Longwood Green, please?

The Chairman –
The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
So, at this point in time, Mr Speaker, it doesn't include that within any specific budget line within this Upkeep of Public Facilities and Areas.

The Chairman –
Thank you.

The Hon. Lawson Henry –
Mr Chairman, could I be then told how is it envisaged that this area going to be maintained when in actual fact I myself and maybe other Members have exchanged e-mails during the budget process about this, we can't keep beating about the bush about this, it need to be maintained, it's a public space?

The Chairman –
Thank you.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, in terms of this, I don't have a specific answer right now, but what I can do is provide assurance to the Members that if it isn't included in the budget, we'll have to be finding savings, not necessarily within this budget line, but because it forms part of the overall Government Estate, it will have to be included within the Infrastructure side of things, so all I can do at the moment is to give some assurance that we will make sure that there's some funding available, like we did last year, through finding savings in other budgets to be able to maintain that area.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you for that assurance, Mr Chairman.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. I'm a little baffled, because we were given the assurance previously that the upkeep of Longwood Green will be included in this budget, so I'm a little bit gobsmacked here to hear today that it's not included when we have discussed this particular area at length on numerous occasions around this table, especially with complaints received from constituents, so it will lead me on to my favourite space, so can I ask, in Grounds Maintenance, if the Dungeon Cemetery is included in here, because we also were given an undertaking that regular maintenance would be for the Dungeon?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Yes, it does include the Dungeon.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Great, thank you for that.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Jeffrey Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Can the Honourable Financial Secretary tell us how much is included in there for the Dungeon Cemetery?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

On the estimate it's around about £4k a year.

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

£4k you say?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Yes, that's what it is, I understand.

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you, Financial Secretary.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you. Just following on from that, Mr Chairman, to say £4k has been included in the Grounds Maintenance for the Dungeon where it wasn't included in the previous year, but if you look at the budget in front of us, the previous year was £71k, but this current year for 21/22 it's been reduced by £265k, so I'm trying to work out in my head that there is a reduction by £6k, according to the budget in front of me, but we've included £4k for the Dungeon, so does that mean another area for Grounds Maintenance has been dropped off to include the Dungeon, but the budget is reduced, so can you explain to me, because I don't get it?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

So, if you look at the actual, the original budget for 2020/21 it was actually 65 and not 71, so 71 was after we went through the Supplementary Appropriation process last year where additional funds was allocated for specific ground maintenance, so included in the £65k that you see here is the same amount that was included in the previous year for the Dungeon Cemetery.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Okay, the revised budget does say for 20/21 £71k, so let's ask it a different way, Mr Chairman, if I may. So, from what the Financial Secretary just stated, the original budget was £65k, the Dungeon wasn't included and

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Sorry, just to be clear, the Dungeon was included in last year's

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

It wasn't, no, it wasn't included

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Yes, the Director is right here, he's telling me it was included.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

When we continuously asked for the maintenance of the Dungeon to be carried out in 2020/21 I've been told that there was no money in the budget to maintain the Dungeon and I also had recent correspondence, which the Director was copied in to where trees, not just shrubs, trees were cut down and left on the side of the Dungeon and I asked can it be collected and removed because it didn't portray a good image for our family and friends who are at their peaceful place and I was told that we don't have any money in the budget for this and I asked how much will it cost to remove these limbs/trees and everything else and it was less than £50 and I was told that there was no money in the budget for the Dungeon Cemetery for 2020/21.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

I don't think that's what was intended when it was said there's no money in the budget for 20/21, there was no additional money that was in the budget that was available possibly for 20/21.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

So, Mr Speaker, I see that the Honourable Russell Yon was making some indication as well, I'm not sure if he want to speak on this particular subject, because I know that he does sit on the Committee.

The Chairman –

Honourable Russell Yon?

The Hon. Russell Yon –

Yes, thanks, Mr Chair. I'd just like to inform Members that the maintenance of the Dungeon with regards to the structural maintenance is undertaken within the Infrastructure budget and the cutting of the trees and other greenery, shrubs etc, comes out of the budget from ENRP.

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

Well, I think just bottom this out, Financial Secretary, I guess that going forward that we will see regular maintenance of the Dungeon, not just cutting the shrubs, but the entire upkeep of the Dungeon, so when I walk to St Paul's Cemetery it will be similar to when I walk to the Dungeon.

The Chairman –

Any other Member have any questions? The Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Just checking on Planning and Building Control, £54k increase.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

So, this is for two additional posts that will be within the Planning Team, so one additional post, but one is actually moving, the funding that was previously for the management arrangements within there from a different Cost Centre into the actual Planning budget now.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

So, is there anybody going into Planning?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Yes, there's one additional post that will go into Planning.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Ah, thank you very much, I think the Chair will be very happy with that.

The Chairman –

Thank you. The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Just a follow up to that, Mr Chairman, the new post will include some expertise in heritage.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

So, the majority of that role will be environmental enforcement, there's no specific requirement for that to be heritage at this point in time.

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

Mr Chairman, it is hoped that consideration will be given to include heritage. Thank you.

The Chairman -

Thank you. The Honourable Jeffrey Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick -

Thank you, Chairman. I just a bit confused here, Mr Chairman, very confused and probably some clarity can be given. Before we was talking about the Dungeon Cemetery and upkeep. Now, my understanding of the upkeep is, like, cutting the grass and stuff like that there, cutting the trees and so forth and we've allocated £4k, that's correct?

The Hon. Dax Richards -

Yes, that's correct.

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick -

So, what really bothers me is that we have given, well, we are going to give £10k to another graveyard that is not our responsibility and we wish we have no obligation on giving such money to, but here we're scraping to find £4k for what is our responsibility, is that correct?

The Hon. Dax Richards -

So, it's a much larger facility, St Paul's Cemetery, and they are, as you mentioned before when the Deputy Financial Secretary was here, we make a contribution of £10k per year into the St Paul's Cemetery, yes.

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick -

I appreciate that, but the reality is that's not our responsibility, the Government's responsibility.

The Hon. Dax Richards -

I think it depends on whose view it is in terms of whether it's a responsibility or not. I know this has been given quite a lot of debate by elected members over the year and I don't know, I see Councillor Henry would like to possibly comment.

The Hon. Lawson Henry -

So, just to say, Mr Chair, that earlier on in the budget process this matter was discussed and my understanding is there's been some correspondence exchanged between ourselves and the Bishop in going forward and that to offset this in the coming years the fees for burial is quite low there in comparison to the Dungeon and .

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick -

No, the same.

The Hon. Lawson Henry -

The same? Or there's going to be some, you know, raising of the fees to offset the contribution made by the, Social Committee I can't remember rightly if this come through the Finance Committee or I certainly saw, or it came through your Committee, I read it in your paper, so maybe you can.

The Chairman -

The Honourable Derek Thomas.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

I can say I sit on the Committee, same Committee as Councillor Ellick here and Councillor Green is the Chairman. That was debated heavily in our Committee and the majority supported the £10k, that is already, now, they have a plan, I believe, on going forward in outer years, but the £10k was approved by the majority of the Committee and it's already been, to my recollection, has already been passed now, the £10k. Sorry?

The Hon. Dax Richards?

It's a part of the budget process.

The Hon. Derek Thomas?

Yeah, but Members had already agreed on the £10k.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

We've already agreed on Head 17 which includes the £10k.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

They already agreed on Head 17 which includes the £10k.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Anthony Green wanted to come in?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Mr Chairman, I can confirm we've debated this quite heavily in our Committee. It was discussed whether or not we should make a slight reduction, but there has been correspondence with the Church and there is intention to try and move forward, but there is a request that the Church made that if in line with what we propose in reduction, they would like to see perhaps similar increases in other areas so's that it can be done, but we could not actually finalise that during this round of discussions and the budget session, so it was decided by the majority, as my colleague said, that we would continue the £10k contribution with the continued view of looking at how we can progress with regard to probably reducing it in future years, but also working with the Church how we can do that over a period of time to allow them to adjust what they need to do.

The Chairman –

Thank you. The Honourable Jeffrey Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you, Mr Chair. I just thought I'd raise it and put it into perspective around here, because I was just bit worried that we're taking £4k to look after a cemetery which is our core business and then we're giving £10k somewhere else which is not our core business, I just want to raise that. Thank you, Mr Chair.

The Chairman –

Thank you. The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

I can confirm that it's not core business, it just happens to be a part of our Estate.

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you, but I would imagine we have some responsibility for people who don't belong to a denomination.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Cyril Leo?

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. The statement that Government don't have a responsibility or obligation to upkeep the Cemetery at St Paul's does concern me. I don't want to be brutal here, but death is a certainty in life and down the years residents of St Helena put all their input into the island and that includes taxes into the local Government and come death we don't suddenly become the sole property of the Church whereby the Church must become fully responsible for the body and the last resting place and through this budget we have the living making a small contribution really to keeping the final resting place of the dead respectable and dignified and I feel this Government or any Government in the future will have to abide by those sentiments.

The Chairman –

Thank you. The Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Mr Chair, I understand, I don't want to go back to the Longwood issue and the upkeep of public facilities and areas and I know the commitment was made, my question is more around can you tell me what facilities, how many facilities are there that we're upkeeping. I'm looking at, from my perspective, the national goals, you know, I think it is very important that we have an upkeep the public facilities for this community.

The Chairman –

Thank you. The Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

We don't have that information off the top of my head, Mr Speaker, but Mr Chair, I'd be happy to be able to provide that detail to the Member. I think it would be also important to point out that under the Sustainable Development team, under the Visitor Information Centre, there's also some funding in there that is earmarked for the upkeep of things like some of our walks, for example, as well, so, but we'll provide that detail in due course to all elected members.

The Chairman –

Okay, thank you. The Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you, Financial Secretary, I'm just looking at the slight decrease.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

It's the same, it's the same as the previous year's budget

The Hon. Clint Beard –

The same?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Yes, £65k it was in the previous year.

The Hon. Clint Beard –
What are you looking at?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
The original budget for 2020/21. Grounds maintenance you're talking about, yeah?

The Hon Clint Beard –
The upkeep.

The Hon. Dax Richards –
Oh, sorry, my apologies. I'm also informed that the materials element that was used previously for the upkeep of the public toilets is also transferred from there down into the line that is now Waste Management, lower down.

The Hon. Clint Beard –
Thank you, Financial Secretary, I just want to make sure that our community has that facilities and ready to use.

The Chairman –
Thank you. The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
Thank you, Mr Chairman. Can I ask the Honourable Financial Secretary where the upkeep of the public access at the Longwood Enterprise Park is allocated in this budget, because, as you know, Mr Chairman, I made a statement, I think it was in formal LegCo in May when I had a fall at the Longwood Enterprise Park because of the very large potholes, so I contacted the Roads Manager who told me to contact Crown Estates who told me to contact the Roads Manager and I said, no, I've already contacted the Roads Manager and then I was told to contact Mr Derek Henry and then Mr Derek Henry said no, that falls under the Agriculture Section, that facility falls under the Agriculture Section, so I was quite dizzy after all these phone calls I made, Mr Speaker, but as you know at the Longwood Enterprise Park there was a Unit the Bank of St Helena uses and the old lady down the hill who's unable to come into town uses that facility on a monthly basis and there are very, very large potholes, I don't even think I can even call them potholes because they are very, very large, so can you tell me, Financial Secretary, as I was advised by Mr Derek Henry that it doesn't fall under Head 27, it falls under Head 26 and I know the Director, Mr Darren Duncan did receive correspondence from Mr Derek Henry in this relation, where does it fall under in this particular budget?

The Hon. Dax Richards –
So, thank you, Honourable Christine Scipio, it is under the Agriculture Support budget and my understanding from the Director is that those repairs are in train and they're already going out for quotes to do that work.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –
Pleasing to know, Mr Chairman.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Any other questions, Honourable Members? The Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Yes, Mr Speaker, so, Financial Secretary, perhaps you can explain with the Longwood Enterprise Park now there is leases in place for that, where does the income from that now sit?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

So, both the income and expenditure actually sits under Head 27 which is the Infrastructure Head.

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Thank you.

The Chairman –

Thank you.

Head 26 – Environment, Natural Resources and Planning, £1,793m

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

We move to Head 27 – Infrastructure, standing in the amount of £1,762m. Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Chair. Under Infrastructure, which forms part of the Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development Portfolio, there are a number of outputs of expenditure. These include the Management and Administration, the Provision and Maintenance of Roads, the Provision and Maintenance of Street Lighting, Rockfall Protection, Building Maintenance, Technical Services, Land Registry and Property Disposal, the National Geographic Information System and Project Management. The Project Management function, Mr Speaker, wouldn't have previously existed, but now, as you know, as part of the Fit for the Future Review, we have a new Project Management Office that encapsulates also what was the Capital Programme Team just outside in the Courtyard.

The Chairman –

Honourable Members, any questions? The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Can it be explained, under Project Management, we've gone from £42k to £139k?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

I just mentioned that time, Mr Thomas, that that now incorporates the Project Management Unit which was over in the, it sits over opposite to us in the Castle Courtyard, so that's moved all now under Infrastructure that previously sat under Corporate Finance.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. So, Financial Secretary, as at 1st April a lot of buildings that Enterprise St Helena had managed has been transferred over to St Helena Government, so, of course, those buildings will require maintenance, so are they included in the Building Maintenance line here?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Yes, they are and also the revenues associated with the rents that are charged for those are incorporated into the lines under the revenue, which in this case I think specifically is again the Built Maintenance budget which has gone up to £65k in terms of revenue.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

So, is that sufficient revenue to offset the maintenance of all these buildings?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Bearing in mind that we already had quite a lot of buildings that have already been maintained, the amount that actually came over actually it's in a pretty good state at this point in time so whilst we will have a routine maintenance programme, there's also a contract in place with a local contractor to continue to upkeep in specific areas as well that don't sit directly within this budget line but under the Visitor Information Service.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

And so for our other buildings that wasn't transferred from Enterprise St Helena, we do have sufficient money in the budget to maintain that?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

The short answer is, no, we all, as I mentioned earlier, building maintenance is a big issue for us, we would love to have more money to be able to maintain our buildings with, as I mentioned earlier, we are looking at a comprehensive approach to setting up a proper asset management framework going forward with a view of trying to find a different way of also being able to finance the maintenance of our buildings going forward, so that would, in an ideal world that would be a much larger figure, but the reality is based on the current financial constraints and we make that budget go as far as we possibly can.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

So I can remember, Financial Secretary that a few years ago a survey was completed of all Government properties and I thought that what stemmed from that would be a maintenance programme.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

There is a maintenance programme, however, it is partly reactive, or I would say majority reactive at the moment based on the level of resources available. That funding programme actually requires something like £15m over a five or ten-year period and we don't have anywhere near that level of funding, but this approach that we're suggesting now in terms of the Asset Management Framework and also potentially talking to the UK Government of allowing asset replacement funds to be set up, should go some way in terms of being able to address some of the long-term maintenance issues for us here on the island.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Right, thank you. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

The Chairman –

Thank you. The Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Just to ask, Financial Secretary, I see a little increase here from £398k to £416k for the Roads budget, is this quite adequate because we have now sixteen new kilometres of road and this little bit here, I mean we got a lot of potholes, you know what I mean, before this here?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

As I mentioned just that time, Mr Chair, in an ideal world, we'd love to have a lot more money for road maintenance, but this is as far as the resources will allow us to go. That additional £18k will help, but I don't know if it will be able to cover all of the maintenance requirements that we would like to be able to cover each year.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Will this help with the community and district roads as well?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

I believe there's still a small allocation within the Provision of Roads Maintenance budget, but I'll just need to double check that for you and confirm, I just don't have that at the moment.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Thank you, Financial Secretary.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Financial Secretary, I just want to check on, this is my thinking that under Provision and Maintenance of Street Lighting they've now and done lots of solar lighting, which is lots of efficiency savings when you're looking at the usage, but I see there's a reduction coming up, 27 from 47?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Yes, so that is that efficiency saving that you just talked about. So, the majority of that now has also helped that team to actually find their 1.1% savings that they were charged with looking at and so that has proved to be very effective in terms of being able to reduce our consumption of electricity.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

And hopefully they continue to roll out a few more?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Hopefully, yes.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you.

The Chairman -

Thank you.

Head 27 – Infrastructure, £1,762m

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

We move on to Head 29 – Children and Adult Social Care, standing in the amount of £3,499m.
The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Chair. I believe the Honourable Chair of the Social and Community Development Committee would also like to do an introduction.

The Chairman –

Thank you. The Honourable Anthony Green?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Thank you, Mr Chairman, probably just a little bit of background and to set the context really. As mentioned earlier, a quarter of our population are aged 65 and over, but also the social needs also extend to other people in the community of all ages and I just want to point out that over the last year there have been about 300 adults, also there have been children on the island whose needs had to be met and particularly for the mobility of children and for child protection and the Directorate has continued to develop and try and grow the community offer and that is in line with the demands that have been placed on the residential settings and so this approach actually will assist with the bed blocking in the hospital and actually to be able to allow a better discharge at the hospital. Social care has provided support to, looked after children in a very responsive approach, ensuring that the individual need has been evident in the care planning process. Also, Piccolo Hill has continued to progress and now provides a supported accommodation for four adults with additional needs and disabilities. The Directorate also has taken on a further house at Piccolo Hill to enable those with limited mobility to access an overnight respite provision and this is the first time this has happened since the closure of Barn View in 2015. Now, with regard to the budget provision, overall there is an extra £125k for the CCC, also an additional £25k for the replacement and the renewal of vital furnishing and equipment and that is to meet the needs of a very complex client group. There's also the Community budget which continues in line with the current demands which is a value for money approach to the delivery of care, thus enabling people to remain at home much longer. Also continue to support those undertaking the occupational therapy supported employment day care activities and access to further education with some support. The budget in relation to Children's Services includes above Children's Residential Service have grown and these have been flexed in relation to the increased demand. As regards to the Adult Services, responded to the arising needs across the island and to enable the rate of growth in demand to continue the review of the services and this like for the BLA and care packages these will be subject to further scrutiny. This will ensure that those who at their highest level of need are prioritised.

The Chairman –

Any questions, Honourable Members? The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman of Social and Community Development, as I thought it was in the Financial Secretary's Budget Speech, but I've heard him mention either today or

on Friday about the ageing population and how we're going to deal with that in going forward, so, Mr Chairman of Social and Community Development, with the proposed budget, taking into consideration our ageing population, do we have sufficient funding, adequate funding I should, I shouldn't say sufficient, adequate funding because you may like to have a gold plated service, so if I say sufficient it may be based on a gold plated service, do we have adequate funding in our budget for the adult, for our elderly people, because I see here the Adult Services, the initial budget for 2020/21 was £913k and it's been increased by £60k to £973k and the Community Care was £1,164m, it's been increased to £1,247m, but, of course, the Community Care doesn't relate strictly to the Community Care Complex, community care as a whole I would assume?

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Mr Chairman, it is interesting, the question of whether we have sufficient funds. We have sufficient funds within the parameters of which we could set the budget, but as has happened over the last few years is that as demand grows and people come out of the woodwork all the time, there are increasing numbers of people who are reaching 65 and over, but also increasing demand for people with disabilities and other issues and the budget has been based on the latest projected figures and as has happened before, where there is a statutory obligation in order to meet those needs, then we have to look at where we can actually first of all make savings within the Directorate, and, secondly, then we get with all elected members and try and find ways of making sure that we find sufficient money. We are very mindful always of the potential for litigation, so it is an ongoing dynamic process, but with regard to what's in the budget is the best estimate that we can take from all the information that is available and the Directorate don't only feed off the Census information, they also have people in the field and all the contacts that have been made, so the best view is taken within the parameters in which budget funding can be provided, so to answer your question succinctly we perhaps won't have sufficient money, but we'll do our best and then we might come back to Government to look how we can do better in future.

The Chairman –

Thank you. The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Chairman and also thank you Mr Chairman of Social and Community Development, because we do owe it to our elderly to make sure that they are safe and the service is there for them and I do appreciate it is alive, because live where you do it, because like you say, things might come out of the woodwork, unknowns, which is appreciated and that what you're saying from the information that you have, taking into consideration variety of information at this moment of time that there is adequate funding to provide the statutory obligations at this moment, but it can change, even by midnight tonight.

The Hon. Anthony Green –

Mr Chairman, the Honourable Member can put it, I can put it no better than the Honourable Member does.

The Chairman –

Thank you. The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Yeah, I just want a bit of clarity here. I sit on the Committee, Councillor Green's Committee, so I just want clarity, because we know over the years there's always been a shortfall in the food provisions for our clients expected to be fed on £6.00 a day and I understand, I've been given assurance that it's increased to £10.00 a day, but the way the budget is set out I can't see where it is, I'm asking where is it, has it been increased to £10.00 a day and if so where is it sitting in the budget?

The Chairman –

The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

I can help with that specifically, Mr Chair. What you will see is under the Community Care Complex, Community Care budget, previously we had £1.16m in for last year, now you'll see it's gone up to £1.247m, but if you look directly underneath that there's also another budget line now called Outreach Day Care and Occupational Therapy and what that has done is basically stripped out some funding from the other areas in the budget and brought it together as another output for expenditure, so in actual fact the increase that's happened within the Community Care Complex has actually been quite substantial in the year, so that £10.00 additional food that you talk about has been included in the overall increase for the Community Care Complex.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Financial Secretary, Mr Chairman, for clarifying that.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Any further questions, Honourable Members?

Head 29 – Children and Adult Social Care, £3,499m

Question put and agreed to.

Schedule I, Recurrent Expenditure Total, £41,549m

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Financial Secretary, I think Pensions and Benefits do not require to be appropriated?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

You are correct, Mr Chair, that is allowed to be spent under the Ordinance in which it is governed, so there's no requirement for that to be appropriated.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Honourable Members, we move on to Schedule II, Capital Expenditure, Head 15, Safety, Security and Home Affairs, standing in the amount of £39k. The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards

Thank you, Mr Chair. This £39k is actually in relation to an air compressor that is required for the Fire and Rescue Service.

The Chairman –

Okay. Any questions on that? The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

So, if we look at Fire and Rescue Service it's saying £33k.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Yes.

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

And then you've got Port Management of £6k, so is there something else.

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Sorry, and the other £6k is the Port Management, so the biggest piece of equipment though is for the air compressor for the Sea Rescue Service.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Okay.

The Chairman –

Thank you.

Head 15 – Safety, Security and Home Affairs, £39k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

We move on to Head 17 – Treasury, standing in the amount of £405k. The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Chair. This £405k is part of the overall £500k ceiling that was set by members of Executive Council and members of the Council back prior to the start of this financial year, however, unfortunately the refurbishment works weren't able to be done until this current year and therefore that £405k now appears in this year's appropriation under Capital. If Members remember, it was actually originally included in last year's budget as Capital.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Any questions, Honourable Members?

Head 17 – Treasury, £405k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Head 21 – Access, standing in the amount of £479k. The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Chair. Under Access, this is really for expenditure or capital expenditure for the St Helena Airport Limited and Members will remember similar to the Fish Processing Plant, there was a budget allocation in last financial year to use the underspends that we had put into the Consolidated Fund for the SHAL expenditure, which has been agreed by FCDO can only be used for replacement of equipment at the airport and as a result of that within this budget now there's £479k which is to procure a Runway Sweeper, do a refueller upgrade and also to look at putting in place a covered area to be able to maintain the asset lives of all the essential equipment at the airport.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Any questions, Honourable Members?

Head 21 – Access, £479k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Head 23 – Health, standing in the amount of £472k. The Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Under Health there are two key areas and the first being the Oxygen Plant, we've heard and talked a lot about the Oxygen Plant over the last six months, so the Oxygen Plant has arrived on the island, however, due to the timing of when it was delivered and the ownership transfer to SHG, it was originally included in last financial year's budget, but now because of the timing now needs to be included in this financial year's budget, so there's £338k that's included in this year's budget for the Oxygen Plant and in addition to that there's £134k included in the Medical budget for essential equipment across the Health Service.

The Chairman –

Thank you. The Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

I just would like to know when the Oxygen Plant will be commissioned or be up and running?

The Hon. Dax Richards

I think the Members asked that question earlier, my understanding is it could be around about October of this year.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Not for certain, you don't know for certain?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

A timeframe is being developed, but the early indications based on the civil works that still need to be completed and also the testing and commissioning is that it will be operational by October.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Thank you.

The Chairman –

Thank you. The Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

I'm not sure if you will be able to answer, but there was some issues with a mammogram machine at one stage at the Health? Is that fixed?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

As far as I know, Mr Chairman, that has now been rectified, but I can double check and let the Member know, but it has been an issue and I understand it's been now fixed, but I will confirm that and let the Member know.

The Chairman –

Thank you.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you.

Head 23 – Health, £472k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Head 27 – Infrastructure, standing in the amount of £91k. Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Chair. For this one, as Members will be aware, every year as part of the Maintenance Programme, there's a significant part of the Maintenance budget that actually ends up to be Capital works, so this £60k out of that £91k is what they estimate to be works that will be capitalised during the year, the other £31k is for some Customs duty on a specific piece of equipment that's been delayed in terms of, I think it's the installation of the Theatre doors at the Hospital, which is quite a substantial amount of money.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Financial Secretary, you did say the Theatre doors, did you say installation and Customs?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Sorry, yes, it should be installation and Customs.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Sorry, thank you.

The Chairman –

Any other questions, Honourable Members?

Head 27 – Infrastructure, £91k.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Head 29 – Children and Adult Social Care, £125k. Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Chair. This £125k is on top of the £25k that is included in the Social Care budget for, this £125k is specifically for the upgrade of the Community Care Complex and the replacement of a lot of the essential equipment there and also some of the furniture.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Any questions, Honourable Members? The Honourable Clint Beard?

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Has any of this purchase started already?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Yes, I can confirm that a lot of the purchases have already started. We've already received our first lot of equipment on the previous ship and I think it's been welcome by the residents there as well.

The Hon. Clint Beard –

Thank you.

Head 29 – Children and Adult Social Care, £125k.

Question put and agreed to.

Schedule II – Capital Expenditure, Total, £1,611m.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Okay, Honourable Members, we'll move on now to the Bill itself and I'll put the question that the Title, Enacting Clause and Clause 1 do stand part of the Bill. Honourable Members, you may now speak, or the Honourable Financial Secretary first?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Sorry, I think this is fairly straightforward, Mr Chair, in terms of this is basically the title of the Bill.

The Chairman

Okay, thank you. Any other Member wishes to speak to the Title, Enacting Clause and Clause 1?

Title, Enacting Clause and Clause 1.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Do we call on the Attorney General, or you will do it?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

No, I will do it.

The Chairman –

I put the question that Clause 2 do stand part of the Bill. Honourable Financial Secretary?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Thank you, Mr Chair. Again, Clause 2 just tells us and appropriates out of the Consolidated Fund the amounts that we have just considered and approved in Schedule I and Schedule II to the main Bill, therefore the total amount to be expended is the sum not exceeding £43,163m and the difference between that and the total funding obviously is the £5.3m that has already been appropriated or already been agreed under the current Ordinance for Pensions and Benefits.

The Chairman –

Okay, thank you. Any questions on Clause 2, Honourable Members?

Clause 2.

Question put and agreed to.

Council Resumed.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Mover?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to report that the Appropriation Bill, 2021 passed the Committee with no amendments and to move that this Council approves the said Bill and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted.

The Speaker –

Do we have a seconder, please?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Then I’ll put the question that this Council approves the Appropriation Bill, 2021 and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted.

Motion No. 2 – The Honourable Chief Secretary.

THE NATIONAL HONOURS AND AWARDS BILL, 2021

The Speaker –
The Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey (Chief Secretary) –
Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the National Honours and Awards Bill, 2021 be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the Whole Council.

The Speaker –
Do we have a seconder, please?

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

The Speaker –
Thank you. The Honourable Mover, you may speak to the Motion.

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –
Mr Speaker, since the National Honours and Awards Bill, 2020 was defeated at the last sitting of this House, discussions have taken place and elected members have expressed their views that both awards, not just the Freedom of the City Award, should be open to everyone and not limited by place of birth or residence. Changes have been made to the Bill so that the Badge of St Helena is now open to all. The Badge of St Helena had been seen as a logical alternative for those who did not meet the eligibility criteria for the Badge of Honour created under the 1957 Statutory Rules. However, the views of Members are reflected in moving away from this to an award which is open to all. Some consequential amendments have also been made to the Bill arising from this change and some other minor amendments have also been made following matters raised by elected members. Members will recall that a proposal for two new awards was endorsed by Executive Council on 30th March 2021, one being the Badge of St Helena and the other being a symbolic Freedom of the City of Jamestown Award. At a meeting in June this year, Executive Council was satisfied that the concerns of Members have now been addressed and endorsed the amendments.

Mr Speaker, this Bill makes provision for the Governor to appoint a National Honours and Awards Committee, it also sets out the eligibility and broad criteria for both awards and provides for nominations and conferment of the awards. There are offences and penalties in relation to the unauthorised use of the Badge and any abuse in connection with the grant of the awards. The Bill provides further for the revocation of the awards if the awardee is convicted of an offence or if he or she engages in acts or behaviours that bring St Helena and the Honours system into disrepute.

Finally, Mr Speaker, the Bill will allow supporting regulations to be made that can, amongst other things, prescribe the insignia and regalia for the Badge of St Helena as well as further criteria for the awards and procedures. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much indeed. Honourable Members, I put the question that the National Honours and Awards Bill, 2021 be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the whole Council. The question is now open for debate. The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this Bill. Like the Honourable Mover said, that it previously failed, that Members wanted to see the Bill being open to all; everybody treated on an equal footing, the Bill is designed to do just that. That was the views of elected members and it was designed to recognise award and recognise persons who provided exceptional services to the island as it is a new badge and the Award of Freedom of the City for Jamestown, for those persons who have made significant contribution to St Helena and its people, so I do see that these awards are exceptional awards and, like I say, it recognises good services and people who have made significant contribution and this can only add value to our long-term economic growth that we are striving to achieve, so I give my full support to this Bill. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Any other Member wishes to speak? The Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this Bill and hope that other Members will too as this is its second reading in the House and from what I can see all the amendments that have been requested have been incorporated. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you. The Honourable Jeffrey Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Mr Speaker, I rise in opposition to this Bill as a matter of principle. How can we as legislators allow such a Bill to come before this House when, in my opinion, it has not been through due process. This Bill was voted down by this House previously, even then I would submit, it did not go through due process. It is my understanding that legislation goes through an appropriate committee, it is discussed and a matter such as this would be discussed in open session for the public to come and hear. They could also send concerns to the Committee if they had any. The Committee, if agreement by the majority, recommends to ExCo that such legislation be part of Government business, ExCo debates and scrutinise, if in agreement the Bill is tabled for Government business, then it is brought to the House for decision by all elected members. This did not happen. Not the first time round and neither before bringing it here today. This is quite obvious as there is no Committee chair presenting the Bill and just to be clear, Members did raise as to why it hasn't gone through the process. We haven't had an answer. Only last week, we were filling out a document for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association on benchmarking where it raised about following processes to which we put a tick by Really not complied with, to which I raised the particular point, but here we are today considering this Bill again. If we are not following due process, then in my opinion, the process is being abused. Therefore, I would ask the Honourable Mover withdraw the Motion and ensure due process has been followed before bringing this matter back to the House. Mr Speaker, for me, it is about principle and my integrity, so, no, I do not support the Motion. I'm not trying to be awkward; I'm just stating the facts. Why is it so urgent that it has to be considered here today? Will there be a detrimental impact on this Government or the people of St Helena if it is not

considered here today? Can the Honourable Mover explain? Furthermore, adjustments have been made. I asked that there be a further look to see how else we can further recognise people on St Helena. As it stands and based on what has to happen, it appears that people of St Helena are no more than an afterthought and I will not be a part of that. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Any other Member wishes to speak? No, okay. The Honourable Mover, you may wish to respond?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank those Members who have contributed to the debate. I’ll respond to, as far as I can, Councillor Ellick to your concerns. As you will be aware, there are some issues that fall outside of Council Committees and that’s one of the reasons why, as a part of the Governance Review, we would look to see more and more of Government’s business being assigned to a Portfolio so that there can be the relevant political oversight. In the absence of that, Mr Speaker, it unfortunately falls to the Administration to bring certain matters before this House and this is one of those. You are absolutely correct, it did not go through a relevant Committee, however, the Bill was heard in Executive Council under the open session and members of the public, of course, would have been perfectly within their right to sit and hear the debate. The Bill was also discussed by members and also before the Bill, there was also discussions around the principles behind the Bill which was whether we should be honouring exceptional services and contributions in this way, so, unfortunately, that is the situation. I would hope, going forward, that these kinds of matters, in fact, going forward there won’t be administration represented on LegCo and so that won’t occur in future, however, on this occasion the situation is as I explained and this is why I’m bringing the Bill to the House today. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you.

Question that the Honours and Awards Bill, 2021 be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the whole Council, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Mover?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the Council do resolve itself into a Committee to consider the detailed provisions of the Bill.

The Speaker –

Do we have a seconder, please?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

Question that the House do resolve into a Committee, put and agreed to.

Council in Committee.

The Chairman –

Honourable Members, I put the question that the Title, Enacting Clause and Clause 1 do stand part of the Bill. The Attorney General?

The Hon. Aine Hurley (Acting Attorney General) –

Yes, Mr Speaker, the Title of the Bill is largely self-explanatory and that is the National Honours and Awards Ordinance.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Any Member wishes to speak to the Title, Enacting Clause and Clause 1?

Title, Enacting Clause and Clause 1.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

I put the question then that Clause 2 do stand part of the Bill. Attorney General?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Mr Chairman, Clause 2 defines the terms used in the Bill.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Any Member wishes to speak to Clause 2?

Clause 2.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

I put the question that Clauses 3, 4, 5 and 6 do stand part of the Bill. The Attorney General?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Yes, Mr Chairman. Clause 3 establishes the National Honours and Awards Committee consisting of a Chairperson, which is either the Governor or Head of the Governor's Office and four other members appointed by the Governor by way of notice in the Gazette being persons of integrity and high public standing. Clause 4 sets out the duties of the Committee, Clause 5 makes provision for the appointment of a Secretary to the Committee and sets out the Secretary's responsibilities. Clause 6 ensures that the deliberations of the Committee pertaining to the selection of a recipient of an honour or award remain confidential.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Honourable Members, you may speak to Clauses 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Sorry, the Honourable Cyril Leo, you wanted to ask something?

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

I just want to ask something, it says there confidentiality and deliberation and I was just gonna ask the Acting Attorney General if you got a situation where someone was nominated, could be by an elected member, and then they wanted to know the reasons why the person didn't

qualify, it may be somewhere else in this thing, but it look like confidentiality will stop that information from being provided, am I right in thinking that?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Yes, Honourable Member Leo, you are correct, because of Clause 6 the deliberations of the Committee pertaining to the selection are confidential so it would not be permissible for a person who is on the Committee and who has been involved in those deliberations must maintain confidentiality, so it would not be permissible for them to discuss what had been discussed at the Committee with someone who was nominated or with any other individual.

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

I thought I would just mention it, Mr Speaker, because during my tenure on Council my Honourable Colleagues has brought to my attention that in the past they, two or three of them has nominated somebody who they thought was exceptional service to the island, but the person didn't get a look in really and there was no, it was clear evidence of their contribution to the island, but they wasn't selected and I wonder if there is a flaw in the system, but this confidentiality clause now will definitely stop any feedback, if you like.

The Chairman –

Attorney General, any further comment?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

My only comment would be that this confidentiality is limited to the deliberations of the Committee, so it means that a person who is on the Committee and who is actually involved in the decision, the deliberation as to who should receive the award, that person is bound by confidentiality and I just want to clarify that point, but you are correct, this Bill does mean that members of the Committee would have to maintain confidentiality as to their deliberations.

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

So, Mr Chair, can I ask the Attorney General if there is some way of putting a clause in here that would allow feedback as to why someone who is nominated wasn't successful?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

To answer the Honourable Member's question, that would essentially be a matter of policy, that would be dependent on the policy behind this Bill, so that would be a policy matter.

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

Thank you, Mr Chair.

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

Mr Chair, perhaps I can elaborate there. I think what's happened is that this has been designed in line with the National Honours that are usually awarded on an annual basis through the British Government and so this is why this clause is in there, but there's nothing to say that it can't be discussed and seeing that this is a local award, but it is the protocol that is usually followed in terms of any individual members in discussing of any national awards, be they St Helena National Awards or those awarded by the UK Government are bound by protocol not to give out, not to divulge information in relation to any particular awardee and in relation to any deliberations that go on.

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, so probably that could be considered in the policy stage, but it is an example of what my colleague was saying earlier, that had it come through the Committee stage I serve on that Committee and I would have been able to bring it up then. Thank you.

The Chairman –

Okay, thank you. Thank you, Attorney General. The Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick -

So, could the Chief Secretary tell me...

The Chairman –

No, no, you're right, we're in Committee stage.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Will the Chief Secretary tell me, somebody who has done exceptionally well for the island, but has a Police record, will they be in tune for this Honour?

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

The criteria will be developed as a part of the regulations, so at this point the Bill doesn't make reference to people's records, that's something that will be developed as a part of the regulations.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Because I don't know if it is true, but the way I believe it, because when you nominating people for MBE's if you have a Police record you don't seem to get any, because I'm speaking from experience because I have nominated quite a few.

The Chairman –

Okay. The Honourable Jeffrey Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Just want to clarify something what my colleague was just saying about. Will the Rehabilitation Act apply to these awards?

The Chairman –

Attorney General?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

When, to answer the Honourable Member's question, when we get further along through the clause by clause and we get to the regulations, as the Honourable Chief Secretary said, the guidelines and criteria for who will be eligible for an award will be dealt with by way of the regulations. Those regulations have not been finalised. Whether or not, it's a matter for those finalising the regulations whether they would wish to take into account when the guidelines are being set those who are making the guidelines, they will decide whether they would think that people who have previous convictions should be considered. It would not be so much a case of applying the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act itself, but certainly a matter that can be considered by those setting the criteria is whether or not people with previous convictions

should be eligible or if they have previous convictions whether there should be some form of time limit on long, whether the conviction is spent, but that would all be a matter for the regulations when those regulations are being drafted and then been finalised as the criteria will be set by the regulations.

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you, Mr Chair. So, as it stands then, the Executive will make the regulations as it will not come through a committee?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Yes, the regulations when they're, the regulations will be sent to the ExCo for their approval and it will be a matter to ExCo whether or not they approve the regulations.

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Yeah, my point, as it is now, most things go through committees before they go to ExCo in any case, even in terms of the regulations, but in this case it will not go through a committee, it will just go directly to ExCo?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Yes, the Honourable Member is correct, because, as the Honourable Chief Secretary explained in answer to an earlier question, this does not fall under the remit of any particular Committee, therefore, this Bill was brought forward through the Chief Secretary. Therefore, because there is no particular Committee under which this matter would fall under the remit of the Committee, in the circumstances the regulations will go to Executive Council for their approval without going through a Committee, because, as explained by the Honourable Chief Secretary, there isn't a relevant Committee in this circumstance.

The Chairman –

Honourable Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

Normally, Mr Chairman, of course Executive Council does take the opportunity to caucus with all elected members and so elected members will get every opportunity through the caucusing to be able to air their views in relation to the regulations.

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you, Mr Chair.

The Chairman –

Thank you.

Clauses 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

I put the question then that Clauses 7, 8 and 9 do stand part of the Bill. Attorney General?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Yes, Mr Chairman, Clause 7 establishes the Honours and Awards to be granted under the Ordinance. The Badge of St Helena and the Freedom of the City of Jamestown may be awarded to any person not withstanding the person's place of birth or the person's place of residence. Clause 8 sets out the criteria for the Badge of St Helena and may be awarded to a person who by exceptional and extraordinary service has contributed to St Helena, including contributions to public life, research, philanthropy, literature and the promotion and support provided to the culture, heritage and development of the Island. The granting of the Badge of St Helena will be by the Governor in consultation with the Honours Committee and Executive Council. This clause also prescribes its ranking and how it may be worn. Clause 9 sets out the criteria for the Freedom of the City of Jamestown which may be awarded to persons who are considered to be admirable or worthy of distinction and who have made a contribution to St Helena that merits special recognition. This clause also makes it clear that the award is symbolic and does not confer any status nor does it grant any rights with respect to residency or citizenship.

The Chairman –

Honourable Members, any questions? The Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

In Clause 8, it says including contributions to public life, what does that mean, that means monetary gifts or something like that there?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

To answer the Honourable Member's question, contributions to public life, if you read the clause together it means, it would be, for example, research, philanthropy, literature and promotion and support provided to the culture, heritage and development of the Island. Philanthropy can include people who give monetary donations, for example, wealthy donors who give large donations, or not large, but who give donations to charity, so to answer that specific question, it could include a philanthropist who gives monetary donations, but it also includes people who make contributions to research, literature, the promotion, for example, people who give their time and effort, but don't necessarily give money.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

So, would I be fair in saying that the people like Women's Corona Society would be nominated for this kind of award? They have given beyond over the years with exceptional duty for the last thirty years as I know it?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

The specific criteria and guidelines for the awards will be set by the regulations, as I stated. However, in accordance with Clause 8, it appears likely that people who are involved in local organisations and who have made a contribution to society in that way would, like, I can't say as the criteria has not been set, but by the reading of clause 8, people who have been involved in organisations which give exceptional and extraordinary service and which have contributed to St Helena would be the type of individuals who would usually be considered for awards of this nature.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. I just ask something for clarity, Acting Attorney General, is I may. Clause 8 (1) and Clause 9 (1) refer to the Honours Committee, but in Clause 2, the Committee is the National Honours and Awards Committee, it doesn't just say Honours Committee, so for clarity, does the words 'National' and 'Awards' need to be inserted, so then it will read in consultation with the National Honours and Awards Committee instead of just the Honours Committee, because I didn't see anywhere in this legislation that refers to an Honours Committee has been set up?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

So, the definition, in terms of the Honourable Member's question, in the definition section, in the interpretation, if you go to Part 1 – Interpretation, "Committee" is defined to mean the National Honours and Awards Committee, therefore, reference to Committee throughout the Ordinance would mean National Honours and Awards Committee under that definition.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

That's not my question, Chairman, I'm sorry. I understand the Committee if the word Honours was removed from Clause 8 (1) totally understand, but the word "Honours" in front of it instigates, from my interpretation, that there is another Committee called Honours Committee, because it got a capital 'H' meaning it is a Committee.

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Apologies to the Honourable Member, I misunderstood your question. Yes, you are correct, that is a typographical error whereby 'National' capitalised 'National' should be inserted before Honours and Committee, you are correct, I am sorry I misunderstood your question at first.

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

Okay, so there's need to be an amendment, are you saying that, from what you just saying that there need to be amendment to the Bill, because also, and I don't want to repeat it later on, Mr Chairman, there's also in Clause 14 where it refers to the Honours Committee and not the National Honours and Awards Committee. The amendment could be just remove the word 'Honours' on the three occasions instead of inserting the words 'National and Awards'.

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Yes, I think the amendment as proposed by the Honourable Member is the more straightforward and more sensible amendment in the circumstances and I agree that that is an amendment which should be made and that that is the best way in which to make it.

The Chairman –

Okay. So, you're asking for the word 'Honours' to be removed?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

So, I asked initially for clarity because the way how the legislation is written, Mr Chairman, it instigate, from my perception, from understanding this piece of legislation that there's another Committee called Honours, so I'm quite happy to propose an amendment, I'm not sure if I should because I've already said, no, I do not support this Bill, so I'm highlighting that there is a, I wouldn't say flaw, because that's the wrong word, but there is an error, but have no intention of proposing the amendment, because I have initially stated in the beginning that I don't support this Bill, so why would I propose an amendment.

The Chairman –

Okay. So, do we have any other Member who wishes to propose the amendment?

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

I was going to say if it hurt my colleague that much, I will propose it.

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

I will second it.

The Chairman –

You'll second it, good, thank you very much. Now, you were referring to Clause 8 and 9?

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

And there's probably further through.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

It's only in those three areas that I've highlighted initially.

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

And there's 14 as well?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Yes, it's 8, Clause 8 (1), 9 (1) and Clause 14.

The Chairman –

Honourable Members, there's been an amendment proposed and seconded in Clause 8 and 9 that the word 'Honours' be removed and the in consultation with the Committee rather than the Honours Committee. Is that correct? Okay. Honourable Members, you may speak to the amendment. No? Okay.

Clauses 7, 8 and 9 (as amended)

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Right, I put the question then that Clauses 10 and 11 do stand part of the Bill. Attorney General?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Clause 10 deals with the nomination for bestowal of an honour or award which must be submitted in writing to the Secretary of the Committee. Clause 11 deals with conferment of the honour or award by the Governor at a public ceremony and requires the name of every person upon whom an honour or award has been bestowed to be published in the Gazette.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Any Honourable Member have any questions on Clauses 10 and 11?

Clauses 10 and 11.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

I now put the question that Clauses 12, 13 and 14 do stand part of the Bill. Attorney General?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Yes, Mr Chairman. Clause 12 creates an offence for unauthorised use of the badge or other insignia resembling the badge. Clause 13 creates an offence for offering or accepting any gift, money or valuable consideration as an inducement or award for procuring the grant of an honour or award under the Ordinance. Clause 14 provides that the Governor may revoke an honour or award if the recipient thereof is convicted of an offence or engages in an act or behaviour which is not conducive to the reputation or international standing of St Helena or which brings the Honours system into disrepute.

The Chairman –

Okay. To be consistent here, Honourable Members, we removed the word ‘Honours’ from the previous 8 and 9, are there any proposals then to remove the word ‘Honours’ from Clause 14?

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

Yes, Mr Speaker, I propose.

The Chairman –

Okay, do we have a seconder? The Honourable Derek Thomas?

The Hon. Derek Thomas –

I beg to second, Mr Chairman.

The Chairman –

Honourable Members, you may speak to Clauses 12, 13 and 14 with the amendment. The Honourable Gavin Ellick?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

May I ask the Attorney General what kind of offence would be frowned upon for not having this award?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

The way in which this is worded, are you speaking about 14?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Or 13 or otherwise in connection with the grant commits an offence. It says in this Ordinance or otherwise in connection with the grant commits an offence, so I just want to know what kind of offence would be deemed not suitable for having this award.

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Is this in Clause 14 you’re speaking about?

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

No, 13 (2).

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

But I think in 13 (1) and (2) it is referring to a person who accepts the grant.

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Yes. Clause 13 creates an offence so that if a person was to accept an inducement, i.e. bribe to give the award that would be an offence. Clause 14 is in respect of if a person has received the honour or award and that person then is convicted of an offence, because, in the way this is worded it would be any offence, because it simply says an offence and there’s nothing in the definition section to limit that, so it would be any offence.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Also, one small conviction for driving or something like that would be detrimental to the person who has this award?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

The wording is may revoke an honour or award, so that means that it would not have to be revoked, may means that there would be some level of discretion, so there would be discretion, so in the case of a lesser offence it would not necessarily have to be revoked because it does not say must or shall, it says may.

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

That’s what I was asking about the offence. Thank you, Ma’am.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Jeffrey Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you, Mr Chair. Is the offence specific to St Helena?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

To answer your question, Honourable Jeffrey Ellick, the way in which it is worded it does not make the offence specific to St Helena. However, as I said in response to the other Honourable Member’s question, there is discretion as to whether or not the award would be revoked as it’s discretionary, it does not have to be revoked, but as it is worded, it does not limit the conviction to be in St Helena.

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you.

The Chairman –

Any other questions, Honourable Members?

Clauses 12, 13 and 14 (as amended)

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Then I’ll put the question that Clauses 15, 16 and 17 do stand part of the Bill. Attorney General?

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

Yes, Mr Chairman. Clause 15 provides that the expenditure relating to these honours and awards must be paid from the Consolidated Fund. Clause 16 makes provision for the Governor in Council to issue regulations to prescribe certain matters, including the insignia and regalia of the Badge of St Helena and further criteria or guidelines with respect to the eligibility of a person for an honour or award. Clause 17 provides that nothing in the Ordinance has the effect of establishing a system for the grant of honours or awards by or on behalf of Her Majesty and that the Ordinance does not in any way affect the prerogative of Her Majesty in respect of honours and awards.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Any questions on Clauses 15, 16 and 17, Honourable Members?

The Honourable Lawson Henry –

Yes, Mr Chairman.

The Chairman –

The Honourable Lawson Henry?

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

16 (b) I would like to propose an amendment that the eligibility of confirming an honour or award that forces the Committee to take into account the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act in some form or other, because you could get a minor traffic offence and I think it is too open like it is, so I would like the regulations to stipulate somewhere there that the Committee in determining an award should also take into account offences that have been expended under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. If I recall rightly, this was part of the ExCo discussion as well, so I'm not sure why it's not here, so perhaps you can find some form of words, because it is too open, if somebody got a minor traffic offence and different people got different ways of dealing with that and bearing in mind this is a totally closed Committee, so it should be, but at the end of the day we need to ensure that we set guidelines that it is there.

The Chairman –

This couldn't be included in the regulations rather than making an amendment to the er.

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

That's what I'm asking.

The Chairman –

Oh sorry, I thought you asked an amendment to (b), sorry.

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Yeah, that in the eligibility they should take into account an application with a minor offence that if it is expended under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act then they can't take it into account.

The Hon. Aine Hurley –

If it might assist, the way in which section 16 is worded, means that it's the regulations that will establish, the regulations will set the eligibility for the criteria guidelines, therefore, it would be at the regulations stage that the regulations would, if elected members wished the

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act to be taken into account or similar provisions of that nature, it is at the regulations stage that that would occur as the way in which this has been worded it provides for the regulations to actually set the criteria and guidelines.

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

So I would be asking the Chief Secretary if she would make sure that when the regulations is drafted that some of the criteria to ensure that minor offences does not disqualify and if it is intended to come before this Executive Council then I will have an opportunity to speak to that again. Thank you.

The Chairman –

Okay?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

Yes, that will be taken into account.

The Chairman –

Thank you. Any other questions on Clauses 15, 16 and 17, Honourable Members? The Honourable Cyril Leo?

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

Mr Chair, I don’t have anything to say on those Clauses, I just want to commend my Colleague for generously assisting in helping us to correct a Bill that she don’t support.

The Chairman –

Thank you.

Clauses 15, 16 and 17

Question put and agreed to.

Council Resumed.

The Speaker –

Honourable Mover?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

Mr Speaker, I beg to report that the National Honours and Awards Bill, 2021 passed the Committee with three amendments and to move that this Council approves the said Bill and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted.

The Speaker –

Do we have a seconder, please?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Mover, you may speak to the Motion.

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Just to confirm once again that the point made by the Honourable Councillor Henry will be taken into account in relation to eligibility, in terms of the regulations regarding the eligibility of conferment of the award to include provision to take into account minor spent convictions and also the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. I’d like to take this opportunity just to thank everybody for their contributions.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Right, I put the question that this Council approves the National Honours and Awards Bill, 2021 with three amendments and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted. Honourable Members, you may speak. No? Honourable Mover, you may respond?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

Nothing further.

Question that the Council approves the National Honours and Awards Bill, 2021, as amended, and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted, put and agreed to.

Division Called.

<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Noes</u>	<u>Abstentions</u>
The Hon. Lawson Henry	The Hon. Gavin Ellick	
The Hon. Clint Beard	The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick	
The Hon. Derek Thomas	The Hon. Christine Scipio	
The Hon. Anthony Green		
The Hon. Cyril Leo		
The Hon. Russell Yon		

The Speaker –

Right, the result of the Division is 6 Yes and 3 Noes, so the Ayes have it, the Ayes have it. Thank you. Our next item of business, please?

5.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Speaker –

The Chief Secretary?

The Hon. Susan O’Bey –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn until 10.00 am on Friday, 30th July 2021.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Do we have a seconder, please?

The Hon. Dax Richards –

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you. The Motion is, Honourable Members that this House do now adjourn until Friday, 30th July at 10.00 am. The Motion is now open for debate. The Honourable Lawson Henry? Honourable Members, if you wish to remove your jackets then you can go ahead.

The Hon. Lawson Henry –

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Adjournment Debate. I wish to raise the following matter that needs urgent attention. SHG has agreed a flight schedule that goes up to the end of March next year, 2022. One of the fundamental reasons for doing this was that it would bring certainty, at least in the shorter term, for the travelling public. Last week, we confirmed three further rotations within the schedule which is all good news for the public. What is not working, however, and needs urgent attention is that the bookings are being made, sorry, urgent attention is that as bookings are being made, confirmation of these are not. This is not acceptable as those wishing to travel need confirmation so that they can arrange to be away from work, but more importantly, this is not how the private sector operate such a business. I recognise fully that SHG is not equipped to handle bookings, but what are we doing about it? It is clear more resources are needed or we should sub contract this service out. Something should have already been done. I have been told that this will get better after the next flight. I think we need to get real. This is not how the travelling public operate. SHG has got to take action to overcome this and not wait until next month. I seek an assurance from the Mover that she will take appropriate action promptly. People are asking why they cannot get confirmation of bookings and method of payment, in particular, those seeking to travel to the island. This information should already be in the public domain; therefore, urgent action is needed. Thank you, Mr Speaker, I beg to move and support the Adjournment Debate.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Member, The Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I will start off with a clarity, because we just voted on a Bill, the National Honours and Awards Bill and the reason I ask for this clarity, because my understanding the majority vote was seven, I might be wrong in this matter, but I know that's been drummed into me since I've been a Councillor since 2012, but my understanding the voting today was six, three and I don't know if that is, constitutes what is in the Constitution and I hope the Attorney General will be able to help us with this.

The Speaker –

Yes, the Attorney General is currently looking into that now.

The Hon. Christine Scipio –

Oh, good, okay that's good, so that's why I wanted to start off with that. So, Mr Speaker, last month in this House, Council and the listening public was informed that Executive Council had agreed, in principle, the divestment of Jacob's Ladder, but Mr Speaker, yet last Friday, the Chair of Environment and Natural Resources in his response to my question stated that no decision had been made for Jacob's Ladder to be divested. If a resolution is made in principle, Mr Speaker, in my humble opinion, this does not mean that a decision had been undertaken. He also stated that legal advice in Charity Law and clarification from the trustees of the British Napoleonic Bicentenary Trust Fund is still being sought on whether the divestment is necessary. It is my understanding that the Internal Funding Coordinator has received such

advice and that it is not necessary for Jacob's Ladder to be divested. It is hoped that a consultation programme in the restoration of Jacob's Ladder in an open-minded manner will kick-start soon as I am mindful that purdah is just around the corner.

Mr Speaker, I am concerned that information published on the St Helena Government website in relation to the Governance Reform, in my opinion, is incorrect. The publication states that the Governor's Office has circulated to elected members a draft ministerial code for their view. I have been questioned by constituents and potential candidates for the general election about the detail of this code. Unfortunately, I am oblivious to the detail as I've not been included in the circulation and therefore, I am unable to provide comments as requested in this publication. Mr Speaker, this publication also states that there was a preference for the current eight electoral districts to be distributed between the seven legislators under the ministerial system. May I ask whose preference? At an informal Legislative Council meeting, two options were presented to all elected members, none of which was accepted. It was unanimously agreed by all elected members present that the seven legislators under the proposed ministerial system will represent the entire island. Mr Speaker, information published by St Helena Government leaves me confused to say the least. I beg to move.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Gavin Ellick –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise in support of this Adjournment Debate. All I have to ask is when are we going to put our Fisheries in line. I would declare an interest as usual, but even today when I asked one of the Fishmongers, Happy Days, how is he doing down there, he can't go along because he has no ice. All I ask Executive Council and Administration put us please with this sorriest state of affairs in order please for the benefit of the island, because nobody got no fish and we won't have that. That's our staple diet, we keep saying that's our staple diet, but we aint doing nothing to help or improve it. Thank you, Sir. I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Any other Member wishes to speak to the Adjournment Debate? The Honourable Cyril Leo?

The Hon. Cyril Leo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, St Helena is surrounded by the South Atlantic Ocean, yet here we are in 2021 and the local Government and community have still to develop and maintain a successful fishing industry, however, this is not for want of trying over many years. Now, once again, we are attempting to develop the local fisheries sector. It is early days; the initial stages are proving somewhat problematic and so is stakeholder engagement. However, we are looking to the leaders of the newly-formed Saint Tuna Corporation to make good progress and thereafter advance their business venture towards successful outcomes for all concerned. The St Helena Commercial Fishermen's Association recently informed all elected members that they also would like to create and commence operation of their initiative within the fisheries sector. Such an option is available for any local investor to pursue. The Commercial Fishermen's Association is working towards creating a regulated unit as an additional section of the local fishing and processing industry. The Association is keen to obtain prompt support from local Government and in particular requests assistance to secure a base area in an ideal location for their proposed operations. The ultimate goal of the Fishermen's Association is, and I quote, "To provide fellow islanders with a boat to plate price for fish which is affordable". Accordingly, the independent endeavours and objectives of the

Association should therefore be of special benefit to the local community. In 1982, United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea permits St Helena special rights for the exploration and use of marine resources within its 200-mile exclusive economic zone. Now, I believe the potential opportunities that are available for fishing inshore and offshore sustainably should be independently explored and progressed by both the Saint Tuna Corporation and the St Helena Commercial Fishermen's Association. Mr Speaker, just to the left of you, hanging on the wall, is a framed letter from the late Prince Philip. You will see that in 1957 Prince Philip told the people of St Helena, and I quote, "No island community can rest easy with all its eggs in one basket". Now, I do not know if that letter has been hanging in this Honourable House for 64 years as a reminder to elected members, but Prince Philip's message and advice is still relevant to this day, no island community can rest easy with all its eggs in one basket. With that Royal advice in mind, I urge the Honourable Chief Secretary to make a special effort to ensure that the St Helena Government provides the St Helena Commercial Fishermen's Association with as much assistance as is possible. Mr Speaker, I hope the Chief Secretary will also come to see that such a venture by the local Fishermen's Association is indeed in the very best interests of the island community. I beg to move, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Any other Member wishes to speak to the Adjournment Debate? Okay, Honourable Members, I think before we go back to the Chief Secretary, we'd just like to clear up this voting concern. Order 17 in Standing Orders says "except as otherwise expressly provided, all questions proposed for decision in the Council shall be determined by the majority of the votes of the members present and voting." Yeah, so I think it's quite clear. And then, (b) if the votes of the members are equally divided then the Motion falls away. I think we understand that, so the voting before was 6 to 3 so the majority took the vote and was passed, okay? Honourable Chief Secretary, you may respond.

The Hon. Susan O'Bey –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank all members for their contribution to the Adjournment Debate. It's been a long two days and, of course, the main business or the main item of business during these past two days has been the Appropriation Bill.

Those areas that I can address now I will do so, so first of all, turning to Councillor Lawson Henry and the bookings system. I am aware of the frustration that's currently being experienced. Of course we are in the process of working through a procurement so that this service is contracted out, but that does not help in the immediate, so I will take an action to go back to the Access Office and to see whether we need to apply additional resource there in order to be able to address that need. It's a good situation to be in that I know the Access Office is currently inundated with bookings, but, of course, whilst it's a good situation to be in in terms of knowing that there is an increased demand for movement to and from the island, if you are an individual making one of these applications then you do expect to get a response in good time, so I'll take an action to go back on that.

I'll also take an action to go back, in the absence of the Chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee today, to raise the concerns that Honourable Councillor Scipio has raised in relation to Jacob's Ladder and to find out, because you're right, if a principle of divestment has been agreed by Executive Council then that's the principle that stands unless there is information or movement that has happened subsequent to that, so I'll take an action to go back to the Chair of that Committee to find out exactly what the situation is there.

I'll also take an action to report to the Governor and the Governor's Office the inaccuracies that are posted on the website in relation to the Governance Reform. You did speak to me about those last week and I will take an action to confer that to the Governor.

In relation to Fisheries, I will certainly take onboard and go back to, wherever I can, go back to in terms of the concerns that are raised, I think everybody is concerned. Fisheries has been an ongoing saga for, you know, for some months now, not just in recent months, it's been ongoing, a tremendous amount of resource and time and energy by all parties concerned has gone into Fisheries and we still find ourselves at an impasse, however, again, I'll take those concerns forward.

We've heard a lot about eggs in one basket, I know the Financial Secretary referred to that in his Budget Speech on Friday and, of course, just to confirm to Councillor Leo that the Sustainable Development Team are looking at how we can diversify through the Sustainable Economic Development Plan so that we are not just reliant on one or two sectors, but that we're able to broaden our ability to be able to grow our economy and to be able to grow the economic pie so that there is more to go around.

Mr Speaker, it has been a long two days and I'm sure everybody is tired and keen to leave, so I'd like to just take this opportunity to say to everybody thank you for your contributions and Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much indeed, Chief Secretary.

Honourable Members, that concludes our business for this session and I thank you all for your contributions and participation and I now put the question that this Council do adjourn until 10.00 am on Friday, 30th July.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Members.

Honourable Speaker

Date