



**St Helena
Government**

ST HELENA GOVERNMENT

**GOVERNMENT OF ST HELENA
PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
TUESDAY 29TH MARCH 2022
FIRST SITTING OF THE FOURTH MEETING**

ST HELENA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE PRESIDENT

The Honourable Cyril Gunnell

EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

The Honourable Attorney General, Mr Allen Cansick

ELECTED MEMBERS

The Honourable Mark Alan Brooks
The Honourable Ronald Arthur Coleman
The Honourable Jeffrey Robert Ellick
The Honourable Dr Corinda Sebastiana Stuart Essex
The Honourable Martin Dave Henry
The Honourable Robert Charles Midwinter
The Honourable Christine Lilian Scipio
The Honourable Julie Dorne Thomas
The Honourable Karl Gavin Thrower

The Honourable Rosemary June Bargo – Overseas
The Honourable Gillian Ann Brooks – Overseas
The Honourable Andrew James Turner – Overseas

CLERK OF COUNCILS

Mrs Connie Johnson

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday, 29th March, 2022

The Council met at 10.00 am
In the Court House, Jamestown

(The Honourable Speaker in the Chair)

ORDER OF THE DAY

1. FORMAL ENTRY OF THE PRESIDENT

2. PRAYERS
(Lord Bishop, Dale Bowers)

3. ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT

Good Morning Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen and all those listening to this live broadcast from the Court House in Jamestown. Welcome to the first sitting of the fourth meeting of St Helena Legislative Council. Honourable Members, today it is over a month since Ukraine was invaded by Russia. For the people of Ukraine, who want to live in peace, and to stand up for democracy, the war has become a humanitarian catastrophe and we can only imagine the effect the war is having on them. Observing from a great distance the best we can do, is pray for the population who are uncertain what future they can have. In the meantime we can help by sending whatever contribution we can, and it is astounding how much in terms of fundraising has been achieved to date. God bless all those who so far have contributed. The business of this Session comprises of 10 Sessional Papers, 8 questions to be answered orally, 4 Motions to debate and thereafter the traditional Adjournment Debate. I extend grateful thanks to the Lord Bishop, Dale Bowers for prayers, Mace Bearer, Merlin George for delivering the symbolic authority of this Honourable House, and SAMS for broadcasting these proceedings live. Some of our team are still away from the island. We await the return next week on 9th April of Honourable Andrew Turner and Honourable Gilly Brooks who attended the Westminster Seminar in London and CPA Regional Conference in the Isle of Man, and also Shanice Phillips our Legislative Assistant who attended the Westminster Seminar. It is usual for Hon Members returning from overseas conferences to report their experiences. We look forward to hearing from them. Also, on Sunday, Honourable Rosemary Bargo departed for the

UK on personal business. We wish her, and also her mom who Rosemary is accompanying, well, and we look forward to their safe return. There is a significant amount of business to be dealt with at this sitting, and so Honourable Members we need to press on. I therefore call on the Clerk to announce the first item, please.

4. PAPERS

SP 4/2022 – Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Mr Speaker, I like to, sorry I beg to present SP 4/2022 – Government of St Helena – Statement of Expenditure in Excess 2020/2021.

Ordered to lie on the table.

The Speaker –

The next item of business please?

SP 5/2022 – The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development

The Speaker –

The Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present SP 5/2022 Government of St Helena – St Helena Government's response to the report of the Public Accounts Committee Sessional Paper 30/21.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 6/2022 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Mr Speaker, I beg to present SP 6/2022 entitled Audit St Helena – Strategy and Delivery Plan April 2022 – March 2025. Before laying this on the table I seek your permission to make a brief explanatory statement.

The Speaker –

Please do so.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you Mr Speaker. As a member of The Public Accounts Committee I present to this house SP 6/2022. Audit St Helena supports the Chief Auditor in carrying out the statutory responsibilities under the Constitution of St Helena and the Public Finance Ordinance. By convention of this House and to preserve the independence of the Chief Auditor, the Plan and Budgetary Estimates of Audit St Helena are scrutinized by The Public Accounts Committee. I am pleased to report The Public Accounts Committee's endorsement of this strategy which is now published in the interests of openness and transparency.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 7/2022 – The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr Speaker, I beg to present SP 7/2022, Withdrawal Warrant 2020/21.

Ordered to lie on the table

SP 8/2022 – The Honourable Robert Midwinter

The Hon. Robert Midwinter

Mr Speaker, I beg to present SP 8/2022 entitled Commonwealth Parliamentary Association St Helena Legislative Council Benchmark Assessment Report August 2021.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 9/2022 – The Honourable Robert Midwinter

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Mr Speaker, I beg to present SP 9/2022 entitled St Helena Legislative Council's response to The St Helena Legislative Council Benchmark Assessment Report August 2021.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 10/2022 – The Honourable Chief Minister

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Mr Speaker, I beg to present SP 10/2022 Government of St Helena Preceding's of The Legislative Council Monday 25th October 2021 Inaugural Meeting.

Ordered to lie on the table.

The Speaker -

Honourable Members, in accordance with Standing Order 2 section 3a. I put the question that the draft record of the proceedings of the Legislative Council held on Monday 25th October 2021 Inaugural Meeting be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.

SP 11/2022 - The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr Speaker, I beg to present SP 11/2022 entitled St Helena's Fisheries Corporation administrator's report and financial statement for the year end 31st March 2019.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 12/2022 - The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr Speaker, I beg to present SP 12/2022 entitled Equality and Human Rights Commission annual report 2020/2021.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 13/2022 - The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr Speaker, I beg to present SP 13/2022 entitled Equality and Human Rights Commission - Financial Statement for the year ended 31 March 2021.

Ordered to lie on the table.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Next item of business please. So this is a confirmation of previous Legislative Council record of proceedings. Honourable Members you will be aware that at the Legislative Council Meeting held on 10th December 2021, five sessional papers relating to the proceedings of the Legislative Council were laid on the table but were not confirmed or signed. These papers are SP 49 2021 Proceedings of The Legislative Council Friday 29th March 2021, first sitting of the 21st Meeting; SP 50 2021 Proceedings of the Legislative Council Friday 26th March 2021, first sitting of the 2nd Meeting; SP 51 2021 Proceedings of the Legislative Council Friday 28th May 2021, first sitting of the 23rd Meeting; SP 52 2021 Proceedings of the Legislative Council Friday 4th June 2021, first sitting of the 24th Meeting and SP 53 2021 Proceedings of the Legislative Council Friday 18th June 2021 first sitting of the 25th Meeting.

We have a situation Honourable Members whereby three of the former Councillors returned following the General Election so therefore following the advice received from The Attorney General, I will proceed by asking for the vote pursuant to the relevant Standing Orders that these Proceedings can be confirmed by the majority from these three former Councillors and then duly signed. Just for the benefit of the public, we all know who the three Councillors would be but just for the benefit of the public, they would be: Honourable Christine Scipio, Honourable Jeffrey Ellick and Honourable Dr. Corinda Essex. Honourable Members in accordance with section Order two section three A, I put the question that the draft record SP 49 2021 proceedings of The Legislative Council Friday 29th January 2021 first sitting of the twenty-first meeting be confirmed. Those in favour say 'aye'. Those of a contrary opinion say 'no'.

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

Mr Speaker, may I have permission to speak.

The Speaker -

You have permission to speak.

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

Thank you Mr Speaker for giving me permission to speak. Mr Speaker I wasn't aware that you were doing this today as I had already communicated with yourself which was other Elected Members were included in there that I was very uncomfortable in agreeing to the Hansards of the previous meetings since there were a lot of gaps in those Hansards and it was my understanding that the Clerks were going to try to fill in the gaps before it was being presented to the House. Is that correct Mr Speaker?

The Speaker -

You are correct Honourable Member. My understanding is that the gaps were dealt with and this was communicated to the Members.

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

If I am able to speak again Mr Speaker. I think that's incorrect. Thank you.

The Speaker -

I will have to call on the Clerk then to give an assistance in this regard. Clerk? OK, on advice from the Attorney General it seems like the best thing to do would be to defer to another meeting. All agreed?

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker -

Next item of business please.

5.

QUESTIONS

Question No. 1: The Hon Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Hon Minister for Education, Skills and Employment:

The Speaker -

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you Mr Speaker, Will the Honourable Minister for Education, Skills and Employment tell this Council what is the situation with regard to suitably qualified Prince Andrew School students being able to obtain access to Degree courses in Britain this year and in 2023?

The Speaker -

Thank you. So the question is Will the Honourable Minister of Education, Skills and Employment tell this Council what is the situation with regard to suitably qualified Prince Andrew School students being able to obtain access to Degree courses in Britain this year and in 2023? Anyone wishing to speak? Sorry. The Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for her question. The Education, Skills and Employment Portfolio is responsible for the management of the Scholarship Awards programme. Through this programme, interested students who meet the selection criteria and have the required qualifications can apply for a scholarship placement in the UK. To sponsor a scholarship student under the current scheme costs approximately £70,000 for 3 years studies.

To date, all funding for this programme is made available from the Education recurrent budget. This year we have two potential scholarship students who have already been through the selection process and have now secured university placements. Investment in our young people is a commitment that has been made by this government and scholarships continue to be a priority for the Education, Skills and Employment Portfolio. Given the current anticipated reduction on our recurrent budget and the need for our portfolio to ensure we are able to continue to provide our core service skills, we were unable to allocate funding to the scholarship budget and as a result we were encouraged to investigate other sources of funding to ensure that we are able to demonstrate our desire to support and encourage our young adults to continue to study and become qualified in their chosen field. Late last year we were made aware that UK Overseas Territories were being offered access to Student Finance that would provide the much needed funding for our scholarship programme this year and beyond. We are now in the process of working with our UK representative and FCDO to better understand if this opportunity will indeed cater for the needs of St Helena and our students. Whilst discussions are still ongoing, it is important that I provide the assurance that we remain committed to our students and through our continuous engagement and the work being undertaken, we are confident that we will be able to support the two scholarship placements for this year. With regards to 2023 the long-term aspirations of the Portfolio continues to be commitment to ensuring opportunities to our young adults, however Elected Members will be aware that we have been seeking a three year budget settlement with FCDO for a number of years, thus far without result. This annual uncertainty, makes it extremely difficult to plan from year to year. To date, we have 10 students who have indicated that they are interested in scholarships for next year, therefore it is of utmost importance that we continue to work diligently and proactively to ensure that access to scholarships continues. It is our aim to review how scholarships are funded in the future with particular focus being placed on developing a process that is reasonable, affordable and sustainable. This is a piece of work which will be given priority by my Portfolio. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Minister for her response. Will the Honourable Minister explain what consultation is taking place with key stakeholders and non-Ministers relating to the changes and the possible implications for the future of our young people?

The Speaker -

Honourable Minister for Education, Skills and Employment?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you Mr Speaker. It's somewhat premature for us to have those consultations at the moment. We are in contact as I said with the FCDO and indeed the UK representative and working very hard with the two students as I said previously who are due to leave us later this year. We aren't able to provide that level of detail to have a robust consultation period because we're still working through some of the things to better understand what student finance has to offer. I know as recent as last week some of the information is only now starting to flow through. So as soon as we've got all that information together consultation with non-ministers and indeed ministers if I'm to be very honest can take place and then we can start talking to

students outside the remit of the two students for this year and indeed the wider community. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon Dr Corinda Essex -

First on point of information I trust that parents will also take a key place in the consultation process, but will the Honourable Minister state if work is also being undertaken to start looking at alternative options if indeed it appears that the student finance scheme is not going to meet the requirements of St Helena's students.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Minister for Education, Skills and Employment?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you Mr Speaker, I can assure the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex that is indeed something that we are actively doing. Student Finance was obviously the primary way forward that was asked of St Helena but we are also looking at setting up a Scholarship Trust Fund. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you Mr Speaker, Will the Honourable Minister state what level of risk exists regarding the possibility of the two students this year not being able to commence their studies on time due to the change in processes and procedures?

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister for Education, Skills and Employment?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you for the supplementary question. As I stated in my response I gave the assurance that these two students were definitely continuing with their studies. As I said we are still working very closely with the UK rep and FCDO to understand what student Finance has to offer but we have proactively looked at how we will be able to support these students to ensure that they will continue on their studies this year. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you for that. Any further questions? No? Then next item of business please.

Question No. 2 - The Honourable Ronald Coleman to ask The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker -

The Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Mr Speaker will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this Council what plans or programs are in place for maintaining our roads network and the fabric of our state owned buildings?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. The adopted road network is inspected monthly by a Roads Inspector who evaluates each road according with the condition, and the criteria is set at condition 1 which being good to condition 5 being very bad. This data is transferred to the maintenance programme where roads with the highest rating are added to the top of the priority list all reports and complaints from the public get added to the to the sorry get added to the do beg your pardon sir, I'm just sorry I'll start again sir. I just lost my way through my notes.

The Speaker –

Please do so go ahead.

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

This data is transferred to the maintenance programme where roads with the highest rating are added to the top of the priority list all reports and complaints from the public get inspected and if it's deemed a high priority, gets added to the work programme. Emergency work and reactive maintenance take priority over planned maintenance. The maintenance programme is a live document with priorities changing after each inspection. Inspection data is also analysed and predicted trends help the planning process and the procurement of materials. An analysis of the strategic roads maintenance based on the condition scoring shows that since October 2020, the average condition for strategic roads has been maintained at around 2.95, so that's the scale rating they use which suggests that on average, the condition of the road network has been maintained stably over the period. It hasn't worsened sir in my humble opinion as one or the public may presume and that is according to the data collected by the Roads department. Regarding building maintenance, a Building Maintenance Strategy and Policy are currently being developed and it is anticipated that these will become active early in the new financial year. They will ensure a consistent approach to the maintenance of SHG building assets for the delivery of service. They also set out a productive approach to the establishment of standards and the assessment of buildings maintenance requests, works and the allocation of limited resources. The aim is to have in place a planned maintenance programme similar to the roads maintenance programme, where SHG assets are sorry where SHG assets will be inspected and a priority ascending and transferred to a maintenance programme. Just to give a little bit of background of what the road section is made up of. The road section has three teams consisting of five workers each, two does surfacing repairs, and one that does vegetation and verges. We also have the utility team to help with minor works, and this might include, the cleaning of drains, structural integrity of drains, road signs and road marking. Depending on the work needed, different teams are allocated to the work needed. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. The Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Can I just ask do you have adequate funding for your programmes for roads and buildings?

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

I think the short answer to that for my humble opinion Sir would be no. I would like to have more of a budget for my road network but unfortunately the budget can only be stretched so far and this has been set for next year's budget. Can I just check on my thing what next? Sorry Mr Speaker. I will give an update for my Honourable friend of the total budget for next year's road allocation. But unfortunately we don't have that information here but I do know it's in excess of £400,000.00.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

I just want to thank the Honourable Member Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Ronald Coleman. Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Mr Speaker may I ask The Honourable Member what the budget is for the building maintenance?

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank The Honourable Member for his question but I just have to check the details so if you can bear with me for one second sir.

The Speaker –

Thank you.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr Speaker I do apologise. I don't have the actual figures here with me today but I will take it on myself to provide the Honourable Member with this information but indications is, it is around the same of in excess of £400,000.00.

The Speaker –

Thank you. The Honourable Karl Thrower? The Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Can the Minister say who is responsible for maintaining non adopted community roads which are generally used by the wider public?

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. If it is a community road and not an adopted road into SHG's road network then it will be the responsibility of the community that serve that road not the responsibility of the Government.

The Speaker –

Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Can the Minister say who is responsible for the clearance of overhanging vegetation that impacts on our road network?

The Speaker –

The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question which I just had a check. If it's on Government land we would have the responsibility for cleaning but if it is on private land then it would be the responsibility of the owner of the land.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Minister for his previous answer. Can the Minister say if the same would apply to non adopted community roads that are generally used by the public?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Allen Cansick –

Mr Speaker, I think we're potentially straying into legal issues here.

The Speaker –

Yes we seem to be straying into legal issues here. Honourable Midwinter do you wish to ask a different question?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I'll withdraw that for now.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Next item of business please. Oh Dr Corinda Essex, I do beg your pardon.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you Mr Speaker, Mr Speaker will the Honourable Minister state what measures are in place to attempt to limit the deterioration of both roads and buildings in order to avoid more costly large scale repairs in the future?

The Speaker –

The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank The Honourable Member for her question, however I do believe that I have answered that question within the original question and I refer to a maintenance program and an analysis of data feeding into that and I also said that we are working to have a program of a similar nature for building maintenance. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you. The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

May I rise on a point of information?

The Speaker –

Please do so.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you. Mr Speaker. The Honourable Minister did indeed say that, but he also indicated that the budget was inadequate and my concern is that if the programmes that are in place are inadequate ultimately if funding is not spent now considerably more will have to be spent in the future so that is the eventuality to which I was referring in my supplementary question. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you for that point of information. Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

May I rise on a point of information, Mr Speaker?

The Speaker –

Please do.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

I do not recall saying it was inadequate. I recall saying that I would like to have more in the budget but I also indicated the constraints of our budget.

The Speaker –

Those are the words that you actually used. But Honourable Dr. Corinda Essex, would that satisfy you?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Mr Speaker I don't think we're here to split hairs but I think what is important is, that the message gets across but we do need to think constructively about spending now to save later when we are actually allocating budgets. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you for that. Next item of business please.

Question No. 3: The Honourable Robert Midwinter to ask The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this Council whether any policy is in place or whether the Government intends to settle a policy to implement a national insurance system for the island and if so what is the time line for doing so?

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. The cost of pensions in St Helena has long been a matter of concern. In terms of accessibility and a long term affordability. The majority of the island's residents depend on three separate schemes. Scheme one is SHG defined benefit pension. A scheme for employees and former employees of SHG. Scheme two is a MiSaint contribution-based scheme offered by Provident Financial Services Ltd and administered locally by Solomon & Company PLC, here on island and three a Basic Island Pension or as we refer it to as BIP, which is not a financial contribution scheme, but a person is eligible if they have contributed socially and economically to the Island. SHG defined pension scheme is only available to past employees of SHG and the MiSaint scheme is a fund scheme based on the contributions made by the individuals and their employees sorry and their employer. However, The Basic Island Pension which is estimated to cost this Government £2.8 million in the next Financial Year is an unfunded scheme. The Basic Island Pension is available to all individuals over the age of sixty-five who have worked on the island for more than twenty years providing that they don't have any other contributions or they don't receive any other contributions from a pension scheme. There are no member's contribution or employer contribution into this scheme meaning that annual cost of Basic Island Pension is paid by St Helena government out of the revenue collected for that year. The number of Basic Island Pension recipients is ever increasing and this is reflected in our ageing population and the limited provision for pensions that was in the past this Government recognises the financial challenges it places on the Public Finance for the future and has set the motion to explore options to try and address this. So what I'm trying to say Mr Speaker the bottom line is that if we are not receiving additional revenue then this scheme is unsustainable. A National Insurance contribution type scheme for St Helena is one of the key options being explored as a means of trying to address the issues of long term unaffordability for pensions in particular

for the Basic Island Pension. A National Insurance Scheme would hopefully provide a state pension based on a number of qualifying years or the number of years you was financially contributing. The individuals accumulate during their working lives monies paid into this system to draw from the system which is the recommended, or the suggested National Insurance scheme. So this scheme would be based on self-employed, employed and employer contributions. Pensioners would be contributing based on ideally progressive percentage system for national insurance contribution which means that the higher the earnings the higher amount paid into the National Insurance Scheme. Another benefit of The National Insurance Scheme would be that it would give the ability to the St Helena's working overseas to also contribute to the system. Pensions are quite complex and setting up a National Insurance Scheme would require technical support. SHG will be seeking the service of a Pension's expert to provide technical advice and support. The technical resources will be expected to do a number of things. One is to outline The National Insurance Scheme to assess whether it is feasible and the conditions needed for sustainability on the island and whether they exist here right now or how they could be developed. We need to assess the public appetite for this as well. We need to understand how the public will feel about a National Insurance Scheme. We need to understand affordability for the workers and the employers. We need to assess if the National Insurance Scheme is viable and to prepare policies and options for consideration. We also need to support the development of Legislation and regulations and we also need to design Administration instructions and the documentations. As part of this policy development process the following will also be considered in designing a National Insurance Scheme for Saint Helena if it is proven to be a viable option. We also need to make sure it is preventing poverty and providing income security for people who have reached retirement age, social inclusion for part-time and casual workers, the self-employed and the Saint Helenians off island. We must do this to leave no one behind. Affordability for workers and employers. A National Insurance contribution should be affordable especially for low earners and the directions of contributions should aim to deliver minimum income standards for living in retirement. It also needs to be affordable for SHG and it needs to be intergenerational risk sharing and transfers. The social contract that would exist between the National Insurance Scheme and the members that also need to be developed. A Terms of Reference has been prepared for this work to be done. Approval from the budget is required before engagement can take place, however it is anticipated that the procurement of this specialist support will be undertaken soon after the budget is approved. A definitive timeline cannot be provided at this stage as to when such scheme would be implemented as the work of the technical experts will need to be determined whether a National Insurance Scheme at first is at all feasible. So thank you Mr Speaker. That's it.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank The Minister for his detailed response related specifically to pensions, however, noting our aging population does the minister agree that some form of additional revenue raising system is required in order to ensure that essential services such as the provision of Health Care can be continued to be maintained into the future?

The Speaker –

The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. As I did state in answer to his question, pensions are quite complex and I wouldn't undertake to say that this can be achievable that is the reason why we are seeking the service of a pension expert. We will have more answers to that question once the experts work is completed.

The Speaker -

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of information. I thank the Minister for that clarification, however, my question is not in relation to pensions. National Insurance can be used to cover a number of things. In particular I was looking at the Health Care of the island and that we have an aging population and that the Health Care bill will continue to go up. My supplementary question was about there being a need for additional revenue raising to support that.

The Speaker -

Thank you for that. Yes I do understand that when this was all being put together, it wasn't going to include health. The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development, do you want to respond to that?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Thank you for clarifying that question my Honourable Friend. In relation to Health this is a piece of work that could be undertaken by the same experts, however it can't be two separate schemes. So again I'm not going to get into how the scheme is going to be set up because like I said it's a very complex piece of work but we will try to do the best to incorporate The Health Care Service within The Scheme but like I said there can only be one scheme. It'll be the work of an expert to determine how that will work.

The Speaker -

Thank you for that. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Mr Speaker, I'd just like to thank The Honourable Minister for his assurance that Health Care will be considered as part of that review. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Yes thank you very much. Any further questions? Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I would just like to ask The Honourable Member if there are any plans to also start some kind of educational programme alongside this idea to educate people on the importance of better long term financial planning. Things like taking a private pension alongside as well as looking at National Insurance. Obviously whilst National Insurance may provide people on the bread line with the cost of living we also need to ensure that they can be living above the bread line.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development, can you respond to that?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank The Honourable Member for his question and also agree that that is something that could be implemented - awareness around education and around long term planning for retirement. So yes throughout the years. We will try and communicate more with the public about the importance of pension schemes and long-term planning for life. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. No, no further questions on that? Next item of business please.

Question No. 4 - The Honourable Dr. Corinda Essex to ask The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development state what progress has been made regarding the erection of the two bus shelters that were purchased and not yet installed?

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank The Honourable Member for her question. Members may recall that at the Formal Lego meeting in December last year, I made an undertaking to seek funding for the erection of bus shelters through the Micro Project element of the Capital Programme, as there is no budget provision within the Infrastructure budget for new builds such as bus shelters. I am pleased to advise that a Business Case was submitted for consideration for the 2022/23 Micro Projects programme. The bid was submitted by the closing date of 4 February; all bids are now being assessed by the Economic Development Investment Programme Review Group, who will make recommendations to Legislative Council on which of the submissions could be prioritised. A Prioritised list will be then be presented to EXCO on 5 April 2022 for their consideration. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Will The Honourable Minister explain why Supplementary Appropriation was not considered as an option for funding the very small costs of erecting two bus shelters which have already been sitting in storage for a considerable period of time?

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank The Honourable Member for her question. However, I'd like to explain that the business case was to incorporate all the Bus shelters under one business case rather than to separate the bus shelters out. So the business case is estimated to be around £29,200.00. So that would include The Two Gun Saddle, The Hutt's Gate, The Levelwood and Red Hill, Half Tree Hollow and Kunjie Field. I would note that the Business Case includes the installation of two additional shelters and a relocation of one existing shelter, The Two Gun Saddle and The Hutt's Gate one. So they are based on actual costs for installation of bus shelters which was identified in the past so we are trying to do it, to answer your question my Honourable Friend in one programme, one business case and not individually. Thank you Sir.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Any further questions on this? No? Next item of business please.

Question No. 5 - The Honourable Ronald Coleman to ask The Honourable Chief Minister.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Will The Honourable Chief Minister tell this Council, are there any plans to make The Castle accessible to all, making it easier for those who would like to visit and work there and when it is likely that this work will be carried out?

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for his question. The Honourable Member will be aware that various options are being considered to improve access to select areas within the Castle building as the Honourable member, along with Cllrs. Thrower, Essex and Midwinter are all members of the small Steering Group that has now been formed to look into this matter. Like most historical buildings on St Helena, the Castle does not fully cater for users with mobility issues. As such, it is recognised that the benefits of disabled access to the different levels, will extend beyond wheelchair users to include parents using a buggy and older persons who might have difficulty with managing steps and stairways. The priority is for all users to be able to access the Council Chamber which is on the 2nd floor. This in itself will facilitate access to other offices on that floor. A feasibility report was completed by the Technical Services on 21 March 2022, just a few days ago. It considers 5 different options for accessing the Council Chamber which have been discussed by the small Steering Group. The Group has agreed that 2 of the 5 options are the most suitable options to further consider. The report also gives a very brief outline of the different stages that will need to be analysed before disabled access to the Council Chamber can be achieved and outlines the benefits, effects and risks associated with each option. The two options that are being considered are: A combined lift option that would first take users from the Castle court yard to the Castle reception on the

1st floor, with another lift taking them to the 2nd floor. Two folding platform stair lifts that will transverse the external steps and internal staircase to get to the 2nd floor. The feasibility study has recently been made available to the wider Council. Some additional information is being gathered by the Technical Services section regarding the preferred options of the Steering Group which will need to be considered by the wider Council to agree the preferred option. A Business Case to secure funding for this project will then need to be developed for submission to the Treasury to secure funding. The possibility of some funding being available by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association is being explored also. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Is there a time line for this project?

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Chief Minister, can you answer that?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you Mr Speaker. So much will depend on securing funding. However, once funding is secured, if secured the project could take at least 12 months, to take account of planning requirements, procurement, installation and commissioning if a lift has to be installed. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much for that. Any further questions? No further questions? Next item of business please.

Question No. 6 - The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this council what action is being taken to establish what European Union funding streams are potentially available to St Helena in 2022/23 and beyond?

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I would like to thank the Honourable Member for her question which I will try and answer. The Overseas Association Decision (OADG) including Greenland was approved by the European Union in October 2021 which makes available a total allocation of €500 million covering the implementation period 2021 - 2027. Under the new OADG there is no direct allocation for any of the UK Overseas Territories, however there is an allocation of €14million that Overseas Territories can access to promote the cooperation between the

Overseas Countries and Territories and the outermost regions, referred to in Article 349 TFEU, their neighbouring African Caribbean Pacific and the non-ACP states and territories. Whilst there are very little sources of EU funding that UK Overseas Territories can apply for, it should be noted that there has been some uplift in other programmes by HMG such as The Darwin + which UK Overseas Territories are eligible to apply for and St Helena has directly benefited from this fund in the past The SHG UK representative Mrs Kedell Worboys maintains close links with colleagues in the EU and representative of the non UK Overseas Countries and Territories ensuring that when opportunities arise for collaboration St Helena is able to take full advantage. In addition SHG external funding coordinator Mr Gordon Ackroyd will continue to monitor and explore all other sources of funding opportunities. Mr Speaker, The UK Overseas Territories have taken every opportunity at a number of JMC's including the most recent, to stress the importance of EDF funding to the territories. There is concerns as to the loss of access the European Development Fund, We will continue to seek clarity from HMG as to how St Helena can access similar sources of funding going forward. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

I thank the Honourable Minister for his response. Will the Honourable Minister investigate the possibility of Saint Helena being able to access funding from the LIFE and Erasmus programmes. The LIFE programme relates to things like climate change and the Erasmus programme primarily relates to training and research like the Copernicus.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I'd like to thank The Honourable Member for her Supplementary question, however I've just been advised that we are no longer allegeable for that funding as you've just referred to. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Will the Honourable Minister, I don't expect you to do it now but in due time, clarify whether in fact Britain is still eligible for either of those programmes? Because if it is, then it's Overseas Territories should be by extension.

The Speaker –

Thank you for that point. Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mr Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank The Honourable Member and just to let her know that we can check on that. We can investigate and see if there is any opportunities. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Any further questions? Honourable Dr. Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

The Honourable Minister touched on this before, but is he aware that at the time of Britain's exit from the EU, The British Government indicated that it was committed to seeing that the Overseas Territories would not be worse off as a result of Brexit?

The Speaker –

Thank you. I do remember that point. Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mr Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member. Yes, I am aware, but as I said we will continue to seek clarity around this issue with Her Majesty's Government or how Saint Helena can access any similar funding.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Any further questions? None. Next item of business please.

Question No. 7 - The Honourable Robert Midwinter to ask The Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister tell this Council what were the main objectives of the Fit for Future reforms, and what aspects of this have achieved tangible results to date?

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I would like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. Mr Speaker, the Fit for the Future Transformation Programme was launched by the Chief Secretary on the 31st July 2020 in response to a number of identified challenges which the public service is currently facing, these include the likelihood of a reduction in financial aid available for the future; Changing demands for services and in particular better customer services; St Helena's ageing demographic and the impact of this on our Health and Social Care services; The need to be more efficient in our processes and how we use our resources; and the need for greater flexibility to respond to the Island's needs, especially during these unprecedented times. The Program has a stated aim to ensure that we improve the experience of our customers and employees; that we identify efficiencies and better ways of working; and that we are fit for the future and whatever that may bring. In addition, the Program aims to implement improvements in the Public Service that supports staff to build a successful career and reach their full potential; Work in an environment that reflects the Public Service values of Fairness, Integrity and Teamwork; Get out of silos and work together seamlessly as one team across the whole Public Service through having the right organizational structure; Have the skills and tools to do their job well through high quality relevant training; Receive regular, practical, skills-based leadership development relevant to their role; Be empowered to continuously improve the processes used and the services provided. This programme is ongoing and is run in phases, the first phase included the restructure of the public service, the

streamlining of the Public Service Management and a review of seven priority areas. These were how we deliver Projects and Project Management across the Public Service; how we deliver administration services on Directorates and the potential centralization of HR, Finance and Procurement administration; our Works Section and how maintenance or groundskeeper activities are undertaken across the Public Service; our First Responders - Sea Rescue, Fire & Rescue Service and Ambulance; how we deliver 'Skills' and 'Employment' services to our community; our Customs and Immigration Services; how we deliver Economic/Sustainable Development activities. A summary of the tangible achievements delivered during Phase One of the Fit for the Future include the Public Service was reorganised into five Portfolios and a Central Support Service to ensure we have a more streamlined structure, with services and functions that have a shared or similar purpose grouped together under one senior manager; the Senior Management Team was restructured creating a smaller Strategic Leadership Team SLT that can work closely together and focus on a joint Public Service response to the issues affecting the island, ensuring we continue to break through silo working; a new Change Management Policy was drafted and implemented to support the change management process; a Project Management Office PMO was created and Head of Project Management appointed into post; around 20 members of staff are undertaking their APM Project Fundamentals qualification as part of developing a culture of project management; Career Access St Helena, first identified as a need through the Labour Market Strategy, was implemented with a team in place; a Sustainable Development Team was created with a Head of Sustainable Development appointed into post; the First Responder review helped identify the need for a Paramedic Service on the island with successful recruitment of two Senior Paramedics; the Customs and Immigration review has led to a commitment for closer and joint working between Customs and Immigration, recruitment for a Joint Head of Customs and Immigration is taking place; there were no redundancies within Phase One of the Programme with all at-risk staff successfully redeployed; a Core Leadership Development Programme has been put in place with the roll out of the Senior Leadership Development Programme, feedback is overwhelmingly positive; an island-wide Coaching Network has been put in place with around 9 trained and qualified Coaches available to support staff development; all Senior Managers have been trained in Mental Health Awareness; a group of emergency responder staff have been trained as Trauma Risk Management Practitioners and Managers to support colleagues who deal with traumatic incidents; the biggest and most cross-cutting review was the Administration Review which looked at how we deliver administration, finance and HR services. The centralisation of these services will, in time, allow for the development of simple process and work-flows, for all staff to be supported by managers within their profession, for consistency in the training and skills development offered and undertaken. Staff in these areas now all have the opportunity for career progression. Phase One Reviews were achieved as cost neutral, and were funded utilising savings gained as a result of the reviews. As with all change programmes, there are a number of teething problems which we are addressing, and we are implementing the lessons learned from this first phase as we move through the programme. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I would like to thank the Chief Minister for a very detailed response. I in particular picked up on the generating efficiencies so it was interesting to note that no redundancies were achieved and the whole thing was cost neutral so far. Can she say whether or not performance or productivity has actually been improved by the reforms?

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I thank the Honourable Midwinter for his supplementary question. I think it's fair to say it will take some time for this to embed itself but it is definitely something that has been worked upon by the Senior Leadership team to ensure that this is definitely achieved.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I again thank the Honourable Chief Minister for her response. Is she aware that the public is concerned that Fit for the Future is not delivering what was intended?

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Yes, we are very aware that the public have these sentiments and it's something as I said we're working towards. I think when we speak more broadly we know that change is not always something that we all take well to and I think it's just time that we communicated and work with the people within those different roles and who have been redeployed to ensure that they understand what the greater picture is – what our aims and objectives are.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Can I ask the Chief Minister will a review of the implementation to date be undertaken by The Ministerial team before any further Fit For The Future plans are progressed?

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. The Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you Mr Speaker. What I can assure The Honourable Midwinter is that now as Chief Minister I have to join The Fit For the Future Group. I've only attended one meeting thus far but we will have feed in now because I'm actually on the group and we work very closely with The Chief Secretary and we are asking that we get updates on what's happening with The Fit For the Future Programme. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you for that. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

I would just like to thank the Honourable Chief Minister for her response.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Any further questions? No. Next item of business please.

Question No. 8 - The Honourable Ronald Coleman to ask The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker -

Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Will The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this Council if the St Helena Government is exploring any other pension systems for the population of St Helena so that the workforce do not have to depend on Social Benefits system when they retire?

The Speaker -

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question but as outlined in my earlier response to a question from the Honourable Robert Midwinter, the majority of Island residents depend on three different schemes; the SHG defined benefit pension scheme for employees and former employees of SHG; and/ or; the MiSaint contribution-based scheme offered by Provident Financial Services Ltd and administered locally by Solomon & Company Plc, and/ or; the Basic Island Pension (BIP), which is not a financial contribution scheme, but a person is eligible if they have contributed socially and economically to the Island. The SHG defined benefit scheme is only available to past employees of SHG and this scheme has now closed to new entrants since 2010. The MiSaint scheme is a voluntary private pension scheme and the Island residents in employment can become members of that scheme and commence setting aside privately funds for post-retirement. Island residents can also make arrangements to join other private pension schemes that may be available outside of St Helena and there are residents on the Island who are members of other schemes and pay their contributions into those schemes. Whether a scheme is 'affordable' or 'rewarding' is subjective and can mean different things to different people depending on individual circumstances. In considering whether a scheme is 'affordable' and 'rewarding', thought should be given to wage levels currently on the Island, the current and future economic climate both on the Island and around the world, inflation and interest rates and the size of the pension portfolio all relates to economies of scale. SHG should not be advocating or advising any individual to join a particular private pension scheme, however SHG should be ensuring that the regulatory framework, laws and policies allows individuals to be able to set aside monies for retirement.

However, as outlined in a previous answer to the question raised by the Honourable Robert Midwinter, a National Insurance Contribution (NIC) type scheme for St Helena is being explored as a means to address the issue of long term affordability of the Basic Island Pension. SHG has drafted a Terms of Reference to engage the services of a Pensions Expert to provide the technical advice and support. This work is not limited to considering the establishment of

a NIC scheme but we will also look at other pension issues on the Island. So what I'm trying to say is that we will try and make good use of this pension expert when he does arrive on the island. I will also just like to add that my Portfolio teams are in conversation with interests from a company setting up other pension projects but we are only in the early stage of this work so I wouldn't like to elaborate any more on that at this time. Thank you Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

I'd just like to thank the Honourable Member for his reply because I'm very concerned about the Social Benefits System.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you very much. Any further questions? No? Next item of business please?

6. MOTIONS

Motion No. 1 - The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I beg that In accordance with and subject to Section 102 of the Constitution, this House empowers the Financial Secretary to authorise the withdrawal of moneys from the Consolidated Fund in order to meet expenditure necessary to carry on the services or projects of the Government in the financial year commencing on the 1st April 2022, until the occurrence of either of the following, whichever is the earliest; a) The Expiry of four months from the commencement of the 2022/2023 financial year: or b) The enactment of the Appropriation Ordinance for the financial year 2022/2023.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Please may I see The Authority? Do you have an Authority?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Forgive me Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Do you have a Seconder? The Chief Minister?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Would you like to speak?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Yes Mr Speaker I would like to speak to the motion.

Mr Speaker, in accordance with and subject to section 102 of the Constitution, I recommend that this House empowers the Financial Secretary to authorise the withdrawal of moneys from the Consolidated Fund in order to meet expenditure necessary to carry on the services and projects of the Government in the financial year commencing on the 1st April 2022, until the occurrence of either of the following, whichever is the earliest: The expiry of four months from the commencement of the 2022/2023 financial year; or the enactment of the Appropriation Ordinance for the financial year 2022/2023. Mr Speaker, it is unfortunate that I am here today seeking a resolution to start another financial year without an Appropriation Ordinance in place. Despite best efforts the Budget for 2022/2023 could not be finalized in time for presentation to this House before the commencement of the new financial year. The key element that prevented this was the confirmation of UK financial aid for 2022/2023. However, I can advise that confirmation has now been received from the UK Government that financial aid for 2022/2023 will be provided to St Helena at the same level as the previous financial year, which is £26.79 million core financial aid, £2.88 million for airport operations and £2.12 million on a call down contingency funding. Based on this, work is now underway to finalize the Government Budget for 2022/2023 and bring this to this Honorable House at the earliest opportunity. Mr Speaker, the process of authorizing expenditure in advance of an appropriation or a rollover budget, as it is more commonly known, allows the Government to continue providing essential public services like health and social care, education and emergency services from 1st April 2022. The Constitution allows for up to one third of the 2021/22 appropriated budget to be spent. This means that if this resolution is passed in the House today, Legislative Council will be authorizing the Financial Secretary to withdraw funds from the Consolidated Fund for expenditure of up to £14.6 million over the four month period. I can advise that based on the spending plans of portfolios and service areas that only £12.6 million is required and this has been allocated by the Treasury as follows: Head 12, Central Support Service at 3,593,000, Head 14, Attorney General's Chambers at 55,000, Head 15 Safety, Security and Home Affairs at 817,000, Head 16 Judicial Services at 59,000, Head 17 Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development at 3,531,000, Head 22, Education, Skills and Employment at 1,135,000, Head 23 Health and Social Care at 2,889,000, Head 26, Environment, Natural Resources and Planning at 537,000. This would all collate to £12,616,000. Mr Speaker, for the benefit of the listening public and members in the house I would just like to point out some elements of those heads. So for instance it is important that I think people don't get a misconception of the money spent under each head. I will give you an example, Mr Speaker, so under Head 12 Central Support Service, the most expensive element of that head is the TC post which consists of two point nine million pounds. The TC post is the post that employs all the TC's. The majority of them works in The HealthCare as Doctors and medical professions. The other largest amount, the second largest amount under the head is supporting Executive and Legislative Council element. Another one under head seventeen, Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development payment on behalf of The Crown. That element within the budget for the four month period is one point one million pounds or over one point one million pounds but this will consist of contracts. Two of them are very large, including the cleaning and public transport but we also make payments to organizations like Shape, Human Rights and The National Trust from that element of The Heading seventeen. The next biggest cost in The Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development is The Airport Operation's Mr Speaker, which costs over the four month period, eight hundred and eighty thousand pounds. I would also like to just point out under Health which is the third largest amount for the four year period, that four hundred and forty-nine thousand pounds is for local medical teams and five hundred and eighty thousand pounds is for overseas medical. So I hope that gives a little bit of contacts and a better understanding Mr Speaker, of some of the elements under each of those heads. In addition to these spending limits Mr Speaker, the Treasury will also be limiting the spending by portfolios

and departments to essential spending only. Essential spending means only expenditure necessary to meet existing contractual commitments of the Government including employment and commercial contracts, expenditure authorized by law and expenditure necessary to limit or eliminate immediate or future liabilities of Government. It does not include spending on new initiatives, projects or contracts. Instructions to this effect will be issued by the Financial Secretary to portfolios and this will be monitored closely by the Treasury. Mr Speaker, I will not be delivering a budget speech today, however I will take this opportunity to announce a small number of tax changes that will come into immediate effect. As is customary the import duty on Alcohol will increase by inflation in line with the current policy, this means an increase of 1.7%. As a result, the duty on a bottle of 750ml of spirit or liqueur will increase by 24p, a 750ml bottle of wine will increase by 9p and the duty on a 330ml bottle of castle light beer will increase by 1p. Tobacco and Tobacco products will increase by 3.7% which is inflation plus 2.0%. This means that on a packet of 20 cigarettes the duty will increase by 18p. There will be no other customs duty changes made. The tax incentives for businesses announced in 2019 in support of the investment policy will continue for the next financial year. Fuel used for electricity generation by Connect Saint Helena Ltd, fuel for use in commercial fishing and in the running of the fish processing plant will remain exempt from fuel duty for next financial year as well. I can also confirm Mr Speaker that there are no proposed changes to the income tax rates for next financial year. Personal allowance will remain at £7,000 and the first £18,000 of taxable income will be taxed at 26% and 21% for the self-employed supporting the Sustainable Economic Development Plan (SEDP) and for income over £25,000 this will be fixed at 31% or 26% for the self-employed supporting the SEDP. Corporation Tax rates will remain at 25% or 15% for those businesses who are supporting the delivery of the SEDP. (Sustainable Economic Development Plan.) Mr Speaker, I look forward to Members support in this resolution and I beg to move. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honorable Member.

Council Suspended.

Council Resumed.

The Speaker –

Honourable Members, before we resume, I just want to say to you and to the public that one of our Members has left us for today. The Honourable Deputy Speaker and now we can resume. We reached the stage where The Honourable Minister had given his exposition. We'll now continue from there. The motion standing for The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development is that in accordance with and subject to Section 102 of The Constitution, This House empowers The Financial Secretary to authorize the withdrawal of monies from The Consolidated Fund in order to meet expenditure necessary to carry on the services or projects of The Government in The Financial Year commencing on 1st April 2022 until the occurrence of either of the following, whichever is the earliest a) The Expiry of four months from the commencement of the 2022/2023 Financial year or b) the enactment of The Appropriation Ordinance for The Financial Year 2022/2023. Honourable Members the Motion is now open to debate. Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I'm certain that the listeners will say that I sound like a scratched record because, I can remember on a few occasions standing up here and expressed my disappointment that we have a roll over budget and once again I'm saying the same thing, we have a roll over budget. I had hoped Mr Speaker, that with this new form of Government, a Ministerial Government that we would be pleased to be announcing our Budget for The next Financial Year, so like a scratched record I will have an obligation to support and approve the motion because if I do not then essential public services will not be able to take place. So, Mr Speaker I support the motion.

The Speaker -

Thank you Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wishing to speak? Honourable Robert Midwinter.?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Mr Speaker, Thank you. I also support the motion because we are where we are. However during the presentation of this motion The Honourable Minister did make reference to our income tax rates and having been previously on the income tax, tax rate, taxation working group there have been a number of suggestions of other ways that we could be generating revenue and I do think that it's time that we do look at the income tax rates. I don't know how many years we have been at £7000.00 a year as the base rate for income tax but it's certainly quite a few years now. I think because the island does need to generate further revenue there is scope to have a higher rate band income tax for the island if it were to be kept at a certain level. I know other jurisdictions do this and they put the cap in place to actually attract foreign investment. So, if for example if we had a £50,000.00 tax band that was 40%, kept at ¼ of a million pounds but I do think this is something that we do need to explore. We need to explore other ways of generating revenue so that we do have sufficient budget to do the things that we need to do on island but I do support, because we need to, The Roll Over Budget.

The Speaker -

Thank you Honourable Robert Midwinter. Any other Honourable Member wishing to speak? Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you Mr Speaker. My Honourable Friend opposite stole my lines because I'm the one that normally says I'm like a scratchy record and indeed, once again, I do have to rise to express my serious concern regarding having yet another roll- over budget. This seems to becoming the norm and this is worrying. Although it is clear how detrimental to efficient and effective operations of St Helena Government a roll -over budget is and how much it seriously undermines, in particular, long term planning, I recognize fully the financial constraints facing The British Government at this critical point in time. But as far as I'm aware, no part of The Motherland is to experience a roll- over budget. Given the small number of British Overseas Territories in receipt of Grant in Aid, one questions why their requirements were not addressed at the same time as those of local Governments in Britain. As I stated in 2017, I'm left wondering if the negative impact of a roll- over budget on small jurisdiction like StHelena is understood fully London. Mr Speaker, I am also concerned and disappointed that non-Executive Council members have not had any information relating to progress regarding the budget settlement process. Is this because Executive Council and/ or senior officials do not wish to share this, or because there has been no progress? Either way, the situation is regrettable and reflects the need for far more inclusive and timely communication relating to really

important matters. Instead of the change to a Ministerial system improving access to information, the reverse seems to be happening. This is very worrying. There were bound to be teething problems at the outset, but after almost six months these should be reducing significantly and we should be getting clarity on the parameters for dissemination of information. Has it been decided whether the settlement will once again only be for one year? When is the settlement likely to be finalised and are we looking at a long lead in period like that experienced last year? Mr Speaker, I hate having to support a roll over budget with all its negative implications, but there is really no alternative as if it is not passed, St Helena Government would have to cease operating this week. As happens so frequently, we have to adopt the least worst option although we know that it is not what St Helena really needs in order to move forward. This is deeply disheartening, but in the circumstances I reluctantly, very reluctantly, support the Motion. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wishing to speak? Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I also support the motion. However, I would point out that calling it a rollover budget isn't quite correct because you have to take into account the lost to inflation on these budgets. Our inflation on island is currently 1.7 % over the last year so in true terms we've lost \$442,000. If the UK inflation at the minute is just over 6%. That would give you a loss of about 1.56 million pounds. We simply can't buy what we would have been able to buy last year just because we get the same amount. So I support it although I agree with my Honourable colleagues that it is far less than ideal if we are to move the island forward. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wishing to speak? Honourable Martin Henry?

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I also reluctantly support the motion. Just to point out two very simple facts. We don't get a three year budget. We as a Government can't make long term strategic plans and now we don't get a year's budget so we also can't deliver on our short term strategic plans. I would just like to mention that the U.K. Government needs to realize this. They're putting this Government in a position where we cannot deliver on any of our plans but as I said earlier Mr Speaker I reluctantly support the motion.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Members wishing to speak? No one else. Does The Honourable Mover wish to respond to the debate?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you Mr Speaker and I would like to thank The Honourable Members for supporting this Budget, this Rollover Budget here today. I would like just to say that in sharing the concerns with my Honourable Friend, Rob Midwinter I do recognize the concerns to do with the near future and the ability we have of generating new revenue and I do agree that we should be exploring all options of generating new revenue. I would also like to emphasize on what my Honourable Friend Dr Essex alluded to which is also disappointing for myself as Minister of

Finance to be able to not present you with a budget here today and my Honourable Friend Karl Thrower has also mention about the effects of inflation and also my Honourable Minister Martin Henry has also mentioned the effects of not having a three year settlement. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. So the motion is that in accordance with and subject to section 102 of the constitution this house empowers the Financial Secretary to authorize the withdrawal of monies from The Consolidated fund in order to meet expenditure necessary to carry on the services or projects of the Government in The Financial Year commencing on the 1st April 2022 until the occurrence of either of the following, which either is the earliest a) The expiry of four months from the commencement of the 2022/2023 Financial Year or b) The enactment of The Appropriation Ordinance for The Financial Year 2022/2023.

Question put and agreed to

The Speaker –

Next item of business please.

Motion No. 2 - The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex

Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House resolves to strongly recommend that in order to support and encourage productivity and personal development of those in receipt of Income Related Benefits and/or registered as unemployed who are able to work, St Helena Government should actively pursue development of a scheme to provide such persons with temporary meaningful work placements on a full time or part time basis.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Is there a Seconder? Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Mover, you may wish to speak to the Motion.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, when one looks around St Helena one can see many tasks that need to be done but are not being tackled. When one asks why, one is almost always told that there are not enough financial and – in some cases, human – resources to do so. When one speaks to those on income related benefits, the majority state that they would really like to earn their money and have something to do. Clearly, it is in the best interests of St Helena and those without jobs who are fit and able to work to find a way to enable them to do something meaningful for their money. This would be a win -win situation. Last year, after considerable delay and a lot of ‘toing and froing’ between different parts of St Helena Government, a pilot

scheme provided a limited number of work placements on the roads and within the forestry section. This scheme was a success and many of those involved are lobbying for something similar to be established. Their continuing enthusiasm is proof that they do not want to just hold out their hands for benefits, slowly losing the skills they already have and becoming increasingly unemployable. They want to work and it is in the interests of St Helena Government to explore how best this can be achieved. It is often stated that productivity on St Helena needs to increase and ensuring that all who can do so work for their income related benefits money is central to achieving this. Mr Speaker, I wish to make it very clear that I am not suggesting that individuals should work for less than the minimum wage and the number of hours per week that they do would have to keep this in mind. A 'one size fits all' approach may not be the best – some tasks are better done in a couple of full days per week, while others could involve a few hours spread over a longer period, or even piece work with realistic targets set. Roads and forestry are not the only sectors that are worth looking at, and consideration should be given to involving the private sector as well. The possibility of placing unemployed persons with private sector businesses rather like what is in place for apprentices could also be explored. This would provide opportunities for persons to build their skills in areas such as farming, construction and fishing which could help them to get permanent work in the future. Mr Speaker, it is sad but true that the longer a person remains unemployed, the harder it becomes for them to obtain work. This results from many factors – loss of skills, loss of self-confidence, a poor self-image, frustration and depression leading to drink and substance abuse problems for some, and the list goes on. This Motion seeks to kick start an effort to break this cycle and identify a way forward to help all those unemployed and wanting work, not only those eligible for benefits. I recognise that including all would increase the financial implications which could be problematic, but with innovative thinking, an affordable solution may be able to be found. From the economic perspective, as Budgets become increasingly tight and the cost of living increases due to global factors that are totally beyond our control it is all the more important that we invest in our human capital, not by giving hand outs to those able to work but by giving them meaningful work placements through which they can contribute to their island and improve it for the benefit of all, while at the same time developing themselves and making a better future a possibility for them. Mr Speaker, this Motion does not dictate what the best way forward must be or how this should be organised, but draws attention to the pressing need for an attempt to be made to develop a scheme which will provide meaningful temporary work placements on a full-time or part-time basis. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Any other member wishing to speak? Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this motion as I strongly believe that having some form of temporary work placement scheme will help to enhance the island, improve productivity and personal development, and also provide meaningful, employment based activity for those who are classed as unemployed however are able to work. Mr Speaker, since being elected to this office, I have been approached by a number of unemployed individuals who are capable, willing and able to work; however, these individuals have not been able to find suitable employment opportunities, and have therefore had to resort to claiming Income Related Benefits. These individuals have expressed to me a desire to work, rather than draw their benefits and then have nothing productive to do during the working day, which in a number of cases leads the individual to then simply spend their benefits on alcohol, in order to pass the time of day. Mr Speaker, there are numerous activities of a minor maintenance nature that could

be undertaken around the island by a temporary work crew, that would both provide meaningful, work based development opportunities for individuals seeking long term employment, and also help to enhance the island at the same time. I therefore fully support this motion. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Any other Member wishing to speak? Honourable Chief Minister Chief Minister?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I rise in support of this motion and I thank the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex for bringing it to the house. Obviously as Minister for Education, Skills & Employment as well I am very mindful that Career Access is in the process of compiling a database so that we have a record of the skills and experiences on island that is both for those employed and those seeking employment. It is our priority to invest and value our people that is within our vision and as the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex has mentioned the Financial Implications will need to be taken on board but I think if we work together both the public and the private sector coming up with an innovative approach to this I dare say that would be the best way forward and I show support to this motion by doing that. I'm sure that Minister Brooks and I through his portfolio would obviously be very supportive of this motion but it would need to be thought through before any firm commitment can be made to it. Thank you very much Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much Honourable Member. Any other Member wishing to speak? Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I rise in support of this motion. We have unemployment and we have a lot of work that can be done on this island and I can't believe that finding a system where by our unemployed can have meaningful work placements is taking so long. What are the practicalities? Do we have the expertise to put together such a scheme? Surely this is not the case. This should be looked at as a matter of urgency Mr Speaker and I support this motion.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Does any other Honourable Member wishing to speak? Honourable Jeffrey Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I rise in support of the Motion. In principle anything that adds value for money and gives Saint Helena and the people on Saint Helena benefits would be a positive move and would be in line with valuing and investing in our people in being more efficient. This also supports our vision as the Chief Minister just pointed out before. I will not go over what The Chief Minister has said but Mr Speaker, I support The Motion.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Any other Honourable Members wishing to speak? Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I rise in support of the Motion. I think my Honourable Colleagues have covered almost everything. If this was to become a reality I will state that this will address a lot of the concerns that are raised in a constituency meeting both on the people who want to work and from the people who think they should work. So for me it seems a bit of a no brainer for us to move forward with this as swiftly as possible. However I also agree with the Honourable Chief Minister, The devil is in the detail as one of my Colleagues like to say. So I fully support this motion.

The Speaker -

Thank you Honourable Member. Does the Honourable Mover wish to respond to the debate?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr Speaker I just like to say I rise in support of the motion and echo the words of my Chief Minister and my fellow Colleagues.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Sorry I got you wrong, it was the Honourable Dr Essex. Trying to steal your motion there Dr Essex. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex, do you wish to speak?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Yes please. Thank you Mr Speaker. I would like to express my thanks to my Honourable colleagues for their support and I trust very much that this issue will be addressed speedily. With regards to the financial implications if the scheme only involves those that are actually already in receipt of income related benefits the additional finance required should be minimal as indeed it was in the case of those involved in the pilot scheme last year. If, as I would personally like to see, it were extended to other individuals who are registered as unemployed but not eligible for income related benefits obviously the associated price tag would be considerably greater and that is a matter that will have to be taken into consideration when developing the scheme and determining what is in fact affordable, but thank you very much for your support. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you Honourable Member. The Motion is that this Honourable House resolves to strongly recommend that in order to support and encourage productivity and personal development of those in receipt of income related benefits and/or registered as unemployed who are able to work Saint Helena Government should actively pursue the development of a scheme to provide such persons with temporary meaningful work placements on a full time or part-time basis.

Question put and agreed to

The Speaker -

Next item of business please.

Motion No. 3 -The Honourable Karl Thrower.

The Speaker -

The Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House resolves that a working group should be established to investigate how the island's electricity generation and distribution systems can be improved. The working group should present a written report to this honourable house once the work has been completed.

The Speaker -

Thank you Honourable Member. Is there a Seconder? Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker -

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Mover you may speak to the motion.

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Mr Speaker, I declare my interest as a director of Green Island Energy LTD. As the Vice President of The Chamber of Commerce there's a customary with Connect Saint Helena LTD. Mr Speaker, electricity in its cost are the key stone to modern life. It effects almost every element of our day to day life from the cost of our food to our internet connectivity. Year by year our independence on it is increasing significantly. The provisional Management of our island's electricity supply is complex. Connect Saint Helena which is 100% owned by SHG is the island's only licence provider. Connect is managed by a board of directors consisting of two executive directors and three non-executive directors with the chief executive officer overseeing the day to day operations of the company. There is also a regulatory authority called The ST Helena Utilities Regulatory Authority commonly referred to as The URA. It is the duty of the URA to ensure that the utilities providers comply with a) ordinances, regulations and directives issued there under regularity utilities services and the conditions of their licence. The authority and any person acting under its authority act entirely independently and are not subject to the direction or the control of The Governor, The Executive Council, Legislative Council or any other person or authority. It is important to note that the URA does not have control of how Connect generate it's electricity as shown in its eighth annual report which states the method of generation is not a matter for the authority. Then there is St Helena Government and Legislative Council which sets out energy strategy, Legislation, policies, etc. This uncoordinated approach has led to an energy strategy being in chaos which if left unchecked will lead to a higher energy prices and a division between those whom can afford to self-generate and those who can't. We have a utility provider who have no direct interface from the people working on strategy, legislation and policy overseen by the regulatory body which clearly want to help but can't because it's outside of their remit and strategy being guided by people who don't have access to the information that they need. People working on energy tenders also don't have access to the information they need therefore the tenders will never be fit for purpose. The end result is that The Government sign a deal to move the island towards 100% renewable energy but missed out on the fact that it should also be affordable and hence stabilize the grid. It also didn't take into account the ever increasing amount of investment the private sector has put into renewable energy. For the information the private sector has invested hundreds of thousands of pounds in over three hundred and fifty kilowatts of generating equipment without any oversight or management. As this vast private sector investment isn't monitored in detail it isn't being taken into account by SHG when considering our island's energy needs. This is despite the fact the 26th in energy strategy encourages private sector renewable energy. Recently the Utilities Provider decided not to move forward with a project

looking at upgrading to a smart grid which have greatly helped improve our island's electricity supply and help it make it fit for the future. The reason that they stopped this project was due to the cost as key Government staff weren't aware of the project they couldn't help address the issue through the soon to be awarded telecommunications licence SHG is currently working on. The island's Energy strategy adopted in 2016 by SHG's very clear on direction the island should be taking but not the technical method it should be achieving or monitoring it nor has it been updated in six years. I've spend a considerable amount of time over the last six months reading reports and documents from the various stakeholders. More recently, I've been talking directly with the stakeholders. Everyone agrees what the goal should be just not how to get there. In order for our island and it's people to achieve the goal of 100% renewable, affordable electricity which will help our economy grow rather than hold it back as it does now. We need for all the stakeholders to move forward as one. In order for that to happen we have to establish the current situation regarding distribution generation capacity from both the private and public sectors, analyse the information and then work with the stakeholders to establish the best method for moving forward in a coordinated manner. A full report should then be presented to this house. I propose that the working group should be made up of several of my honourable colleagues. We will then also invite representatives from the key stakeholders including but not limited to The Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development team, Environmental Natural Resources, Connect Saint Helena and The Saint Helena Utilities Regularity Authority. The Terms of Reference for the working group should be determined by The Representatives from This Honourable House. The working group should be seen as the first step towards the goal of sustainable 100% renewable and affordable electricity. If the island manages to reach this goal, everybody will benefit. If we don't then we will move towards having an island where no one can afford to live and nobody can afford to do business. The whole world is moving towards the same goal. There is a huge amount of international help available but before we can access it we need to be clear on what we need. I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Members, The Motion is - That This Honourable House resolves that a Working Group should be established to investigate how the island's electricity generation and distribution systems can be improved. This house will then, as a result of the findings of The Working Group make a recommendation to The Saint Helena Government. Does any other member wish to speak? Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this motion, as I believe that the generation and distribution of electricity is a critical factor that needs to be cost effectively managed if the island is going to develop an economy in a sustainable manner. The development of all sectors of our small island economy is in some way affected by the cost of electricity, and we should be doing all that we can as an island to move away from diesel powered generation towards renewable energy, both to reduce generation costs and also to protect the environment. As such, any improvements that can be made to the current generation and distribution of electricity should be investigated fully, and presented back to this House for further consideration. I therefore support this motion. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Does any other Honourable Member wishing to speak? Honourable Martin Henry?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Mr Speaker, I rise, in clear support of this motion. I did have a few notes which Karl has mentioned in his long disposition which includes joined up thinking and working towards a clear goal by all parties involved simply because this is such an important thing for Saint Helena. It clearly effects everybody. It effects every business, every household and it affects us as SHG. The other thing which I would just like to add which I did have down is of course security. We have seen over the last month, the issues with oil when there is an issue in one part of the world and obviously if we're going to continue to bring in these resources from these parts of the world then we're effected by it. We clearly can produce our own power and our own energy without this input and I would just like to add that the security of energy is like it is for every other part of the world is a must I support the motion. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Any other member wishing to speak? Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you Mr Speaker. I rise in support of this motion. Mr Speaker, last week I attended a meeting with some expertise from the electric generation company and also some expertise that is currently here in this room. One of the concerns that was brought to my attention in that meeting was the stability of our grid in relation to PV panels. So Mr Speaker, I do welcome a working group to not only look at the wider elements but also to look at details, technical details within our energy generation. Mr Speaker, if recommendations are put forward to the government by that working group in ways that we can protect the stability of our grid and the long cavity of our grid. That is something that this government should take notice to. Mr Speaker, I would just like to say based on what I just said that we need to move forward but we also need to protect what we have before moving forward. Mr Speaker, as I said I rise in support of the motion.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I also support this motion. Electricity prices are a major issue as The Honourable Mover has already mentioned, both for private consumers and also indeed for businesses. In fact, from my perspective as President of The Chamber of Commerce, I'm constantly reminded that one of the major reasons for the high price of items for sale in the shops, etc. is the high cost that has be paid for Utilities - both water and electricity. I think it is timely to consider how the situation could be improved. Obviously the whole world is facing massive fuel increases in terms of price and I'm afraid S Helena is going to be subjected to those as well. So it is now probably even more important than it has been in the past to try and establish what can, and what should, be done to improve the situation to help to make electricity more affordable, more reliable and more secure. So I welcome the concept of the establishment of a working group to address those issues. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Is any other Honourable Member wishing to speak? No. So does The Honourable Mover wish to respond to The Debate?

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Mr Speaker, I would just like to thank my Honourable colleagues for their support on this matter. Thank you very much.

The Speaker –

The Motion is that this Honourable House resolves that a working group should be established to investigate how the island's electricity generation and distribution systems can be improved. This house will then as a result of the findings of The Working Group, make a recommendation to The St Helena Government.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Next item of business please.

Motion No.4 - The Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House resolves that the St Helena Legislative Council Benchmark Assessment Report, August 2021 be endorsed.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Is there a Seconder? Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member, Honourable Mover, you may wish to speak to the motion.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, whilst the St Helena Legislative Council Benchmark Report pre-dates this current Ministerial Government, the contents thereof remain wholly relevant to the development of the St Helena Legislature. In this respect the Benchmark Report has been reviewed by this Council, and a response has been appended to each recommendation contained therein. This information is contained within Sessional Paper 9 of 2022, which has been laid on the table alongside this Report. Mr Speaker, the recommendations from the report are wide ranging; some relate to policy and procedural reform, some to organisational and structural reform, and others to the physical facilities that are used for our Parliamentary business. Mr Speaker, in presenting these documents for endorsement by this House, I trust that we, along with our colleagues within the administration, will collectively take responsibility for the delivery of the actions agreed by this Council. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. The motion is that this Honourable House resolves that The St Helena Legislative Council Benchmark Assessment Report August 2021 be endorsed. Does any other member wish to speak? Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this motion. The recommendations are wide ranging throughout the report and it will take many years to implement all of them. However, it will form a much better form of Government for us all. Sorry, we've already got the form of Government but it will certainly enhance and enable us to act more like a ministerial Government where's as the minute I feel in a position of transition and I think that the report ranges from everything from accommodation for the members to how we should scrutinize and set up scrutiny committees. So I fully support this motion.

The Speaker -

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

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick -

Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the motion. As you will see in the report I along with others contributed to this report. The recommendations in the report are crucial to improving and strengthening democracy on Saint Helena. In relation to some of the recommendations work has been done and hopefully can be used to assist with the recommendations. Mr Speaker, I support the motion.

The Speaker -

Thank you Honourable Member. Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak? Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex

Thank you Mr Speaker. Like my Honourable colleague opposite, I was also involved in the actual formulation of The Benchmark Report through interviews with personnel from The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and I'm very pleased that indeed a lot of the comments that were made to them have been reflected within the report which I think provides, if you like, a useful stock check list against which to monitor progress, both current progress and indeed progress in years to come. As my Honourable friend opposite has said, some of these issues are already in the process of being addressed or have been addressed but there are a lot more that require urgent attention, not least the office accommodation for Honourable Members which I'm afraid leaves a great deal to be desired and is considerably less favourable than I've enjoyed under previous Councils so I fully support the motion. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you Honourable Member. Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak? No? Honourable Mover, do you wish to respond to the debate?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Firstly I'd just like to thank my colleagues for their support as the mover of this report I will continue to monitor progress and update this council accordingly. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you Honourable Member. The motion is: That this Honourable House resolves that The Saint Helena Legislative Council Benchmark Assessment report August 2021 be endorsed.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Members. Next item of business please.

7.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this house do adjourn sine die.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Is there a seconder to the motion please? The Honourable Christine Scipio-Odean?

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. The motion is: That this house do now adjourn sine die. Honourable Members the motion is now open for debate. Just to remind members is that you have ten minutes please. Anyone? Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Adjournment. Firstly Mr Speaker, I wish to thank those constituents who took the time to attend the two presentations given by Connect Saint Helena Limited on the subject of Non-Revenue Water, and also to thank Connect for responding to this request, which was raised by constituents of the St Pauls District Area. I also wish to make mention of the recent relocation of the Liberated African remains from the Pipe Store to the No. 1 Building in Rupert's Valley, and commend all of those who have been involved in making this happen. This was a very important first step in a wider project that will ultimately see the mortal remains of these individuals laid to rest once again, and then commemorated appropriately. Mr Speaker, I would similarly like to make mention of the recent 70th Westminster Seminar, which was organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Having been able to participate virtually along with a number of Colleagues, it was again a very helpful learning opportunity, so I would like to express my thanks to the CPA for allowing this to happen. I would also like to publically congratulate my esteemed colleagues, Councillor Gillian Brooks and Councillor Andrew Turner, for their contributions to the seminar, both of which appeared very well received by their respective audiences. Mr Speaker, I would also like to place on record how pleasing it is to see the public response to local fundraising initiatives in relation to the Ukraine, and to acknowledge the effort of those involved, in particular the Ladder Challenge fundraiser organised by Nick Stevens and his colleagues at New Horizons. It is at times like these that we get to see how much our small island community can pull together, so well done to all involved. Mr Speaker, thus far I would appear to be painting a pretty positive picture, however, not all is going well, and there are several matters of increasing public concern; in particular how we, collectively as a Council,

are communicating with the public and amongst ourselves. In this respect, we are too often finding out about important matters of public interest either from our constituents or via the local media, and I for one would have expected the Council to have been officially briefed on. This is not good, and an apology after each occasion that it happens does not actually bode well; what we actually need is a better chain of reporting, that ensures a “no surprises” approach to briefing the Elected Representatives of the people. Mr Speaker, something else that really needs improvement is response times, and in this respect the Elected Members met on Friday 4th March to finally iron out between us what should be included in the Scrutiny Committees Order, so that we can move on with setting up the two Scrutiny Committees without further delay; and yet, here we are 3 weeks later and I am unclear as to where we are with this now, although I hear that it has perhaps gone to the Attorney General’s Chambers to ensure that what we have agreed between us conforms in legal terms? So anyway, I would ask the Chief Minister if she can say in her response when will we be seeing this again, and more importantly, when will it be enacted so that we can get on with electing Chairs and then start implementing this important body of work? Mr Speaker, it seems only a fortnight ago that we met formally in a different venue; probably because it was both a fortnight ago, and also in a different venue. This moving around from pillar to post in order to find a suitable venue that is available for this House to meet is both inconvenient and also unsustainable; again I would draw attention to the contents of the CPA Benchmarking Report which was laid upon the table today, and call on our colleagues within the Administration to look at ways to proactively address the needs of this Council in an “inclusive manner” that provides improved facilities to give the Legislative Council increased stature, and make it a distinct and separate institution from the government. Mr Speaker, when we did last meet, I raised the question regarding progress towards commissioning the new oxygen plant, which it was understood would finally be completed at the end of this Month. Apparently not, as we are now hearing that the engineers were unable to commission this plant due to a faulty part. It would therefore be good to have a proper update from SHG on exactly what went wrong, and in particular where we go from here. In closing Mr Speaker, I would simply add that what is going on in Ukraine at the moment continues to sadden me, and I hope and pray that this situation diffuses swiftly, with minimal damage and cost to life. My thoughts are with all who have been affected by this conflict. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member, Anyone else wishing to speak to the adjournment? Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon Karl Thrower -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I rise in support of the Adjournment. Mr Speaker, I will be missing my duty as a Legislative Councillor if I didn’t bring up the thorn in SHG’s side which is the R2 project. What happened with the Side Path road project or what was announced last week is an absolute disgrace. How can we not check and do basic project management before we dig up a perfectly good road and then find out we can’t replace it with what’s on island. I spoke to one of the retired road builders. He used to work for the road section for over thirty years as he stated everybody seems to have known there were no foundations for the wall. In fact he pointed out that he simply looked at it from town. You can see there’s no foundations from the wall because it sits on the bedrock and then we were assured by The Programme Management Unit team that when they came out and did all the public presentations that although they didn’t think that the correct stone grade was available on island, they’d already ensured what was already available on island could easily replace it. This project has now halted for an undisclosed amount of time which means more people going up and down

constitution and basically inconveniencing a lot of drivers but I think the bigger problem is the sheer cost of fixing this. It is going to be hundreds of thousands of pounds. I just simply think that the public deserve a better project management and I would severely hope that the Government are going to do a full enquiry as how this mistake happened and steps will be made to prevent it from happening again. Thank you Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wishing to speak to the Adjournment? No one? Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Since being on Council more and more families have been looking for housing especially those who are in privately rented accommodation facing eviction. With more saints returning home and in need of their homes we desperately need to provide more houses. So what is SHG doing about this? What plans do we have for the immediate future to address this situation? Also Mr Speaker we are still awaiting the bunkers hill development which will provide much needed housing. House builders are still awaiting. Mr Speaker, Side Path road. The island is in really need of Side Path road. This is one of the oldest roads on the island and it is well known that such old structures don't have foundation and any works to upgrade needs to take this into account consideration before even starting any works or signing any contracts. To blame the stone Mr Speaker just to say there are more than one quarry on the island providing excellent stone. Also the crusher that provided the stone for the hall road is still on island. Now Mr Speaker, we come to our little ship, The Helena - arrived with a long awaited cargo, food stuffs, animal feeds, cement, etc. but cannot get alongside Rupert's because of weather conditions and this has happened on a number of occasions. Do we have a plan b? If this lasts for a number of days, Mr Speaker, Ascension Island can have the worst sea conditions than Saint Helena and they still offload in the open seas. Some food for thought for Saint Helena. Then we have the stacker out of action in Jamestown wharf. This hampers cargo operations and although we will be moving to Rupert's soon, this may be longer than we think as side path road remains closed until work can be sorted and then work is completed. What is the plan b when major equipment like this fails? Mr Speaker, people are also questioning what plans we have to bring international banking to St Helena, especially as we want to encourage real inward investors. Finally Mr Speaker, I would like to say something about our vision? Some people think it is wishful thinking but Mr Speaker I like great aspirations. Something for all of us to aspire to and hopefully the road map will show us how to get there. Thank you Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Does anyone else wish to speak? Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Another scratchy record I'm afraid. It is a source of concern that there is still no Legislative programme in place and that important Legislation that was nearing completion before the General Election has still not been finalized. We have been told that in some instances the responsible Minister wishes to make an input which is understandable but the new Government has been in office for almost six months so any revision should surely be nearing completion by now. In the inaugural meeting of this Council in October 2021, I outlined to this Honourable House a number of key pieces of legislation and policies that were

well advanced and in need of urgent finalisation and I emphasised the need to maintain the momentum. One was the updated Land and Building Disposal Policy to be called The Property Disposal Policy which is intended to help make Government land more affordable by introducing a tiered pricing structure amongst other changes. At Constituency meetings and in this Honourable House, the issue of the pressing need for affordable land is raised constantly and so it is disappointing that, as far as the non-Ministers are aware, this draft policy has not progressed. Turning now to the R2 project, the rebuilding of Side Path Road. The current situation is certainly not desirable but it is resulting in a lot of unpleasant criticism of the management, engineers, contractor and quarry operators – some of which goes way beyond what is justifiable. For example, the quarry operators cannot supply materials that strictly meet British standards because of the island's geology which is totally beyond their control. The fact is that local materials were used for the Haul Road and other major road reconstruction works in the past without adverse consequences. The project team has recognised that there is a need to identify another approach that will not rely so heavily on the compaction roller which vibrates the retaining wall and so avoid repetition of the collapse and they are working on developing this. It is correct that there was considerable local knowledge indicating that that wall was undermined and did not have firm foundations before the project commenced. Indeed I was present at meetings when that point was raised and it is a pity that that was not taken on board in the method statement for the renovation of the road. However, I think it is important not to forget that hindsight is a wonderful thing and that blame cultures are destructive. Mr Speaker, last year I stated several times in this Honourable House that I considered that the introduction of a new system of governance was too hurried and that it required more groundwork to be in place prior to any major change if the Ministerial form of Government was to be able to get off to a really positive and sound start. Sadly, my concerns have proved to be justified as after nearly six months we still do not have the Scrutiny Committees in place, revised Codes of Conduct approved, revised Standing Orders that include provision for Ministers' question times, etc. All these changes were promised to the voters before the General Election as being intrinsic parts of the new Ministerial system and there is growing discontentment that all these building blocks underpinning the new system are still in the making. Obviously their formulation cannot be rushed because they are far too important to risk getting wrong, but the new system cannot function fully in their absence. There is indeed, as some of my Honourable Colleagues have indicated, a pressing need for more information sharing in a timely manner at all levels. This needs to be a high priority going forward. The current breakdowns in communication and late notifications about key issues need to become a thing of the past if we are to function efficiently and effectively as a strong team all sharing the common goal of achieving a better future for St Helena. Without improvement there is a real risk that one or more 'them and us divisions' will develop that will undermine united and informed decision making and undermine what we all see as the key priorities that need to be achieved for St Helena. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Does any other Honourable Member wishing to speak to the Adjournment? Honourable Martin Henry?

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Thank you Mr Speaker. I rise to speak to the Adjournment. As someone who has over the years developed a system of learning which approaches new ideas with an analytical format before allowing the topic to evolve and expand and often leaving me with even more questions. I would like to make a few simple observations of my experience so far. Being new to Politics, faced now with being a Minister in an area which requires a high level of re-direction and

holistic attention. Within a new political system on ST Helena, the learning curb has been steep. However, as we start to assemble this new system with scrutiny committees, ExCo proceedings debating the pros and cons of different methods as well as talking to and listening to informed and interested members within our community. There are often a few constants which continue to reoccur. It would appear that we all have our own ideal version of what this form of new Government should look like on Saint Helena. For some the way in which this new system is currently working is now less open and transparent. There is debate, about whether scrutiny should be conducted before or after a decision has been put in place and for others the answer, lies somewhere in between but where? It could be argued that discussing every issue which comes across the Minister's table with every one could make this Government slow and indecisive, the very reason we moved away from a Committee Based System. Likewise, it could be argued that if everyone contributed to making a decision then how can the same people conduct independent scrutiny? On the other hand there may be less need for this after effect scrutiny if more support is used developing the right decision in the first place although what happens if everyone agrees on something that turns out to be the wrong choice, who then is accountable. When I was selected to be part of the Governance Commission there was strong opinion that this was an undemocratic approach yet a quick Google search informs you that independent commissions and think tanks are one of the most common methods used in most democracies. There were strong debates within The Ministerial team itself about collective responsibility. At what stage do we make decisions? Should it be cabinet or ExCo and how should it be formatted? My answer to how we deal with all of these questions doesn't come from a political Science book, the works of Plato or even the countless documentaries I watch. It comes from one of my favourite Scientists whose analytical approach to physics has helped redirect our understanding of the very foundations of its field and expanded our thinking exponentially. Richard Feynman was an American physicist, a brilliant teacher known for his work in quantum physics, Nobel Prize law in physics and one of the best known Scientists in modern times. He understood that to progress a field of Science you must first have doubt in its current conclusions and in order to progress democracy the approach can apply just the same. In the words of Feynman doubt is not to be feared. It is the idea of the age of reason. This is the philosophy that guided the men who made the democracy we live under. The idea that no one really knew how to run a Government led to the idea that we should arrange a system by which new ideas could be developed, tried out and tossed out if necessary and more new ideas brought in. A trial and error system. This method mirrors the success of Science since the 18th century. Doubt and discussion are essential to progress into the unknown. If we want to solve a problem that we have never solved before we must leave the door to the unknown ajar. Doubt is not to be feared and welcomed and discussed – Richard P. Feynman.

In conclusion, I would like to leave us all with the simple thought. Advances in Science involved an evolutionary process of testing new ideas with a simple trial and error system. The same can be applied to developing our dynamic Government. We all bring with us, a wealth of different ideas. We should embrace these differences, test our ideas before we dismiss or adopt their findings but equally important, we should always be open to the fact that the future is full of unknowns for which today's answers might not be tomorrow's solutions. Thank you sir. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak?
Honourable Jeffrey Ellick?

The Hon. Jeffrey Ellick –

Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Adjournment. Mr Speaker, when I appeared before This Honourable House, in December last year I gave an undertaking that I would have the proposed Immigration ordinance back in the house in February this year. However, Mr Speaker, having reviewed The proposal ordinance, which was put forward by members of The previous Council I was not content to bring the proposal to this house as in my view some parts did not fit with the vision of this new Government. Achieving Economic Growth by making St Helena more accessible for visitors, investors and settlers by modernising Legislation and Policies that make St Helena more attractive to live, work and do Business. Mr Speaker, I've been working with my teams to produce a document that will be more in line with the Government's vision. We will soon be having meetings with my fellow ministers and Legislative Members to present an updated Proposal before going out to public consultation. The reason for public consultation is that there are a number of significant changes to that what was previously proposed. I look forward to engaging with my colleagues and constituents on this matter as I believe this piece of Legislation will be one of the major components to moving Saint Helena forward and achieving our vision. Mr Speaker, I support the Adjournment.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Does anyone else wish to speak? Honourable Christine Scipio?

The Hon. Christine Scipio -

Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, it's been brought to my attention that individuals are dropping off their animals that they no longer need in areas across the island. Mr Speaker, animals I'm referring to would be kittens, hens and guinea pigs. The most common area where these animals are being dropped off is at Casons. I'm taking this opportunity Mr Speaker, to try and discourage animal owners for abandoning the animals across the island but I would like to encourage them to contact the Environmental and Natural Resources and Planning Portfolio who would be most grateful and provide the support to these animal owners to try to relocate these animals. It is my understanding, it's been brought to my attention that guinea pigs were dropped off last weekend and of course we know that guinea pigs do breed rather rapidly. So this is a shout out to the listeners Mr Speaker to try to discourage them from doing that but encourage them to contact my Portfolio who will assist with trying to relocate the animals that they have no longer need or wanted or whatever reasons that may be. Mr Speaker, it is correct that we've been elected for almost six months if I can count up on my fingers but I am certain that Constituents will be understanding that with this new form of Government, we are working collectively to develop a frame work or structure to take this new form of Government forward. The majority of the time, Mr Speaker, was trying to understand this new form of Government, trying to define for instance, myself, the role of The Minister. How do I engage with my Portfolio Director? How do I engage with Back Benchers. So a lot have been taking place although I do know it was said here today that we've been in place for six months. Since October, Mr Speaker, there have been a lot of bumps, high blood pressures, debates, working long hours which at sometimes I struggle to find the balance between, for me between work and family time. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Does any other Honourable Member wishing to speak? If not Honourable Chief Minister, do you wish to respond to the debate?

The Hon. Chief Minister -

Thank you Mr Speaker and thanks to everyone who participated in The Adjournment Debate. I have to say as I stand here today, it is somewhat a lot calmer knowing that we are not using the same microphone as we were doing in the last session and it's a little cooler for us here today as well. So, OK I'll try to acknowledge some of the things that were mentioned. Before I start I must thank my colleagues both from the Back Benchers and my Ministers for highlighting or obviously bringing a little clarity with regards to some of the concerns raised here today. It was lovely to hear Honourable Robert Midwinter bring forward some positive news and I think we all join you in saying well done to all of the people who have been proactive with regards to connect and the presentations we will welcome more of that from other sectors as well so that the community can be better informed especially when it involves areas such as electricity and water and all the things that affect the cost of living. Commendations were given to the Liberated African Advisory Committee for the hard work with all their supporters with regards to the remains being moved from the pipe store and I'd like to send heart-warming thoughts to them because I can only imagine emotions were running very high in something that this island has been wanting to achieve for a long time. We hope now that the final works will go into place very soon. I also acknowledge and thank The Honourable Robert Midwinter for participating in The Westminster Seminar that took place recently. Thank you. His kind words and support for our fellow Councillors, Gillian Brooks and Andrew Turner and the excellent sterling job that they did in putting St Helena out there and encouraging people to learn more about us. Indeed this Government would like to put St Helena in the international arena and will continue to work with that. A great deal was mentioned about communications and I think we all on this Council will say that it is something that we will encourage and need to improve both from us as ministers speaking to the Back Benchers and vice versa and the public sector to ensure that we know what's happening but as I've done before, I'll encourage the listening public to use your district representatives to bring forward any concerns but indeed anything positive as well so we can learn from what works best for you as in when we're communicating with you. I would like to say that I have obviously spoken about communication break downs and I can tell you that all Portfolio Directors have now committed to ensuring that all contentious matters should be brought to the attention of ministers and back benchers and have this process being put into place to ensure that this doesn't reoccur and I do agree that apologies at times does not fix the problem because on the forefront and people see us as Councillors and then think that we have answers to this but that is not always the case. I'm grateful for Portfolio Directors for ensuring that this doesn't reoccur. There was talk about the Scrutiny Committees and I can tell you that we as Ministers have been working on this like you rightly mentioned. We've been supported by the AG's Chambers and I am hoping that I can have some communication back to you by early next week with regards to the formatting of that particular order which is very important to us if we are going to be an open and transparent Government and it will allow the community to know of the work that we're doing. There was mention of The Oxygen plant and I can tell you that the commissioning team that arrived and an exemption was given was for the UPS. They came here to the island. They did find that there was a fault with a part on the UPS and it is now anticipated that the engineers will arrive back here on the island towards the end of April to recommence works to ensure that we keep progressing with an Oxygen plant becoming operational. Councillor Karl Thrower mentioned about the R2 project and I think we can all say we were gravely concerned when this became public. We recognise those concerned and the teams are working through the designs to look at the potential financial implications. At this time unfortunately it is not intended for this to be a significant overall cost implication but at this time I don't have any further information that I can provide you with regards that and

then I guess we also fear to say that an enquiry will be put into project management to find out more about that detail because I don't have that information here with me today. Councillor Coleman spoke about housing and I remember in our previous Formal LegCo and obviously in our Info LegCo's we've been talking about housing and how important it is. We've talked about the CDA's and of course Bunkers Hill was specifically mentioned today. Because of the Commercial in confidence with regards to that all I can say at this point is negotiations are continuing. You mentioned about the MV Helena and the weather conditions. I don't know at this time what are those restrictions regarding open sea off loading and this is just my opinion at this stage - it would need to be followed through but I would assume that it would be at a higher risk if we were offloading from open sea, but I know it is something that we did in the past with the RMS ST Helena. So I'd need to check on that for you, Honourable Coleman, because I don't have that information here with me. The stacker, I think yes all of these problems (it is seen as problems) and we need to try and fix it as quickly as we can. So these are things that I would encourage you to check and find out what's going on with it. I don't mind supporting it, but it's just about communication once again and ensuring that we'd be better understand, what's happened with regards to this equipment. International banking has been something that's been on the agenda as well and we are keen to work with Bank of Saint Helena, to better understand their service and projects, availability and what new products and services they can offer because obviously Bank of Saint Helena is 100% owned by Government and we need to be ensuring that we improve our accessibility to the outside world knowing that we are still very much cash dependent here but the rest of the world isn't. Thank you for your support also for the vision. I'm pleased that you are supporting us with that and saying that you've encouraged the aspirations. The road map that you referred to, I can tell you that we're hoping to share that with members by the end of this month or indeed early next month, just to make sure I'm covered here because the end of the month is only days away but we have been working with the Senior Leadership team of Government to ensure that a strategic plan is forthcoming and from that strategic plan we can build our Legislative program and obviously that needs to be in line with the priority set within our vision. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex spoke about the Legislative Program and as I just said just then and thanks also to Minister Honourable Ellick because he's mentioned about the Immigration and I know that he's been working hard with his Portfolio and that will soon be coming to our table along with that of a wider Council. There are other pieces of Legislative documents that will be coming very soon, but I will also turn to The Honourable Christine Scipio, whereby she says even though we have been here for six months, the workload, the learning, the becoming aware of how Government works and also I guess it's been a big learning curve also for The Public Sector and the Administration that we depend on it's been a change for them as well because the whole Government structure has obviously changed. I also agree with The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex, that the framework, if more would have been done with the framework, I probably could breathe easy and sleep better at night but it's a whole lot of work that needs to be done after the fact if I can put it like that. So we're very mindful of that but hopefully with the Select Committees order coming forward very soon then question time can follow up and hopefully that will obviously alleviate all the concern with regards to those things and then the lack of communication, I think I've spoken about that previously. Communication is key and I will continue to say that but I do agree that if there is lack of communication, the decision making won't be as informed as we wish and I stand for informed decision making and I want to ensure that we will move forward with decisions that are evidence bases and without that kind of openness about it, it will undermine our teamwork and that's not something that I would want to encourage. I also thank Minister Honourable Martin Henry for his contribution today for highlighting the gaps and concerns that currently exist and how it is that we'll probably not get it right first time round but we do need to put the framework there and then work and understand

if it is the best one and how we can improve it and make sure that we go forward. There was mention of Ukraine and I think as we sit here today, a lot of us are wearing our ribbons of blue and yellow but I'd also like to tell the community that we are very supportive of the fund raising that's going on. I was one of those who actually made it from the bottom to the top of the ladder. It was not intended but I guess it was everybody working together and the emotion that could be felt on Jacob's Ladder that day is to our credit and I say well done to all the organizers for that. We are planning to do a quiz night in April next month to also help to raise funds for Ukraine, so to the listening public, we'd encourage you to participate in that when the information comes through. I think what Honourable Christine Scipio also said about the balance. I think it is good for the community to hear the work load that is placed on us. I know when the Councillors or Honourable Karl Thrower, Midwinter and Coleman were recently on radio, I know you mentioned about the working hours are not defined and neither should they be, I don't think it should be because we need to be assessable to our constituents and I thank you all for doing that but also with that, we also have a lot of work to do in our normal working hours or Government working hours, so we're doing that. We're attending meetings. We're trying to get out into the community. So it's a lot of work and I'm not complaining about it. I still enjoy what I do and I thank all The Ministers and Back Benchers for your support and encouragement and commitment but we have to strike a balance, unless six months in and we'll be saying we're tired because as Honourable Christine Scipio has mentioned, balancing family life with work life is essential and important if we are to do the best that want to do to achieve the best for St Helena. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Thank you very much indeed. 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 sine die.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

This motion stands adjourned. Very likely, there will be a Formal Meeting in April. Thank you very much.

Honourable Speaker

Date