



ST HELENA GOVERNMENT
PROCEEDINGS OF MINISTERS QUESTION TIME
TUESDAY 25TH APRIL 2023
SECOND SITTING



ST. HELENA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE SPEAKER

The Honourable Cyril Keith Gunnell

ELECTED MEMBERS

The Honourable Rosemary June Bargo
The Honourable Gillian Ann Brooks
The Honourable Mark Alan Brooks
The Honourable Ronald Arthur Coleman
The Honourable Jeffrey Robert Ellick
The Honourable 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 Andrew James Turner

OVERSEAS

The Honourable Karl Gavin Thrower

Legislative Council Office Assistant

Miss Shanice Phillips

PROCEEDINGS OF MINISTERS QUESTION TIME

Tuesday, 25th April, 2023

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

(The Honourable Speaker in the Chair)

ORDER OF THE DAY

1. **FORMAL ENTRY OF THE SPEAKER**

2. **ADDRESS BY THE SPEAKER**

Good morning Honourable Members and everyone else who may be present. Welcome and a very warm welcome also, to all those listening to this live broadcast by SAMS of the second Minister's Question Time being held today in the Council Chamber at the Castle, Jamestown. Honourable Members, before continuing may I pause to offer sincere congratulations to the Honourable Councillor Gillian Brooks. In accordance with section 37 H 1 B of the Constitution Council Gillian Brooks has been appointed the temporary Minister for the Safety, Security and Home Affairs Portfolio. This appointment took effect from Monday the 24th of April 2023 until the 1st of June 2023. While the substantive Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs Portfolio, Honourable Jeffrey Ellick is off Island. Councillor Gillian Brooks, congratulations on your appointment. Thank you Honourable Members for your contributions to this very important activity an activity that was able to commence on 24th of March 2023 as a direct result of painstaking amendments made to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Council, which were implemented once new Standing Orders took effect from 16th of December 2022. Minister's Question Time, improves democracy, cementing improved transparency and accountability. We are all aware that the public health for some time be looking forward to regular Minister's Question Time sessions. Elected Members have decided they should take place once every month. Can I take this opportunity to say thank you to those members of the public that have provided feedback and in respect of the Minister's Question Time held on 24th March 2023 and we encourage you to continue providing feedback. As I said in my last address, Minister's Question Time is regulated by Standing Orders and a number of rules. Teething difficulties can be expected in early settings. During a practice session, the Elected Members found that when applying Order 9 of Standing Orders in its entirety, rule 6 imposed only one supplementary question for each substantive question. And this prevented thorough exploration of the issue raised and initial response given. There may well be other issues that Elected Members will identify that will require review and formal changes made to their Standing Orders or Elected Members feel that any proposed changes should be made after Minister's Question Time has been trialled further, and this should include due consideration of any comments that the public may already have made or may still make. This sitting has to be considered part of the trial period and additional feedback is welcomed. If I may, can I take you back

to the Formal Legislative Council Meeting held on 24th of March 2023. At that meeting, a resolution determined that rule 5 and rule 6 of Standing Order 9 be suspended for the duration of that Minister's Question Time. The topic was "progress made in achieving the St Helena Government's vision and strategy dated April 2022 to March 2025". The suspension of Standing Orders allowed Non Ministers additional supplementary questions, but not only that, because the topic chosen was very broad and because parts of it cross cutting or related to activities undertaken within a particular Portfolio that other Ministers was in charge. It allowed another Minister if they decided to assisted answering the question and they indicated their intention to do so by switching on the red light. So back to this Minister's Question Time for today in accordance with Order 9 rule 3 of Standing Orders, the Chief Minister was notified of the topic of business to be transacted. That topic is "Tourism Development". The Chief Minister accordingly acknowledged receipt up the topic, and Non Ministers have framed their questions. All of the questions repaired by Non Ministers are addressed to the Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development, the Honourable Mark Brooks. The questions have been listed in alphabetical order, but will be selected at randomly for response, the duration of Minister's Question Time. Starting from the first question is one hour. The Clerk and timekeeper for this sitting is Miss Shanice Phillips. Honourable Members let's go to work. Miss Phillips may we have the first question please.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Mr Speaker, may I rise on a point of order?

The Speaker –

You may.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you. This pertains to suspension of Standing Orders in accordance with order 19 and order 21 of the standing orders of the Legislative Council.

The Speaker –

Is there a seconder? Councillor Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Mr Speaker, I'd like to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Corinda Essex, Honourable Dr Corinda Essex you may proceed with your motion.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you Mr Speaker. I beg to move that rule 5 and rule 6 of Order 9 of Standing Orders be suspended for the duration of Minister's Question Time to be held today. This motion seeks to suspend rule 6 of Order 9 of Standing Orders so that the restriction to only one supplementary question per each substantive question will not apply. This should help to satisfy the public that Minister's Question Time plays an important part in increasing openness, transparency and accountability, which are all central principles of good governance. In order for the parameters for questions in the House, as set out in Order 8 to be applicable following suspension of rule 6 of Order 9 it is necessary to suspend Rule 5 also. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Does anyone else wish to speak? No one. So I put the question that rule 5 and rule 6 of Standing Order 9 is suspended for the duration of this Minister's Question Time.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

Clerk the next item of business please.

3.

QUESTIONS

Question No. 1 - The Honourable Rosemary Bargo to ask the Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –

Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I would like to declare my interest as an owner of a hospitality business. Mr Speaker can the Honourable Minister for Treasury Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this Council if funding will be made available to allow businesses on St Helena to engage the expertise of marketing personnel to assist them in marketing their businesses to reach the wider market, whether local or internationally.

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. And I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. Before I begin Mr Speaker, could I share with you in congratulating Councillor Gilly Brooks on her temporary appointment for Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs and just to say, welcome her to the Ministerial team and look forward to working with her over the next couple of months.

The Speaker –

Thank you.

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development) –

Mr Speaker. Tourism is a wide reaching topic, which I think all Portfolios play a part, whether it be big or small in some way in achieving our strategy in Tourism Development. And so I have asked my Ministers, if there's any questions that they feel is relevant to the Tourism Recovery Strategy that is more or less worked on by their Portfolio that they would join in and how to answer it. As I feel that Tourism Development is everybody's business, including the Elected Members sitting here today. So, Mr Speaker, without further ado, I will try to answer my Honourable Members question on "Is there any funding available for businesses on St Helena to engage in expertise in the marketing personnel". So as Members are aware, there has been an element of a ring fence funding package for Tourism Recovery. Now that

funding package was approved by the FCDO just recently a few weeks ago, and has been communicated to the public. However, we are still working on the details on what and how we actually implement that funding, and try to reach the most benefits for the tourism sector as a whole. 500,000 might sound like a lot of money to some individuals but when you're trying to run a whole tourism sector, and recovery from what the whole world has just been through, it doesn't go a long way. And we need to make it go as far as possible and also to demonstrate that we are capable of organizing and spending the funding, in order for us to demonstrate that we deserve to have an additional funding. I can't say at this time, Mr Speaker, that there will be funding available to allow businesses to engage with expertise of marketing personnel. But overall, the funding is good to increase the marketing product on St Helena, and to increase our availability to different industries around the world that will tap into our marketing efforts in order to sell the Island to their customers. If we do employ new or more resources, if we do put funding into more resources, Mr Speaker, to develop our marketing efforts, then I'm sure that we can incorporate some of that work with that individual or that personnel, to help the private sector businesses achieve what they want to achieve. So there might be an element where a certain individual who has marketing experience employed should as funding could hold workshops where they invite sorry, local businesses to join in. So they can share on their experience and the professionalism as in how to market it, accommodation or restaurant and so on. But as much detail as I can give it this time, Mr Speaker, because we are very early stages in deciding how that money will be spent. And of course, from the recurrent budget, we're still not at the place where we have allocated our budget yet. So I can't say if any money will be allocated from the recurrent budget into marketing efforts for the private sector. So thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member for that detail, Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you Mr Speaker, and thank you my Honourable friend. Mr Speaker can I just make a statement as such?

The Speaker –

But is it relevant to that?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Yes, I believe that, you know, for St Helena to be successful, we need to ensure that all businesses are you know, thought about, to enable us to sell the tourism package to people overseas. So I believe, you know, we need to be at every business in mind and how we can find ways to you know, develop everyone, not just a few. Okay. And also, I would like to take this opportunity, Mr Speaker to congratulate my friend and colleague, Minister Brooks. Off course I congratulated her personally but publicly, I would like to congratulate you on your achievements. Well done. Okay.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Are you going to ask a supplementary question?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Not at this time.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Anybody else wants to ask questions. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister, please state within what timeframe the 500,000 ring fenced funding has to be spent.

The Speaker –

Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I like to thank my Honourable friend for the question. My understanding it is a one year ring fence funding so my understanding would be that we would have to spend that money within the year. So, yes, Mr Speaker, we have a year to spend that funding was my understanding. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Given the short time frame, considering we're already nearly one quarter into the year. Can the Honourable Minister please indicate the date by which he hopes that the details of how the funding will be spent will have been finalised?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'd like to thank my Honourable friend for her question. So I can confirm that work has already started in a detailed plan on how that money will be spent. I have seen the first draft of that document. However, I do think it needs a bit more work. And of course, that document still needs to be shared with Cabinet and the wider Council. But I know that there's suggestions in that, in that document on how we deliver this is to set up a Project Board. So almost treat this 500K like a project to deliver with key KPIs and targets to set, for that project board to deliver, which will help us to identify where the areas that didn't do so well. And the areas that it did so well, hopefully by the end of this year, or end of this financial year, in order to put together a business case for how we continue to develop with our tourism sector going forward for years 24/25.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Next question please.

Question No. 2 - The Honourable Andrew Turner to ask the Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure & Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Andrew Turner?