



St Helena
Government

ST HELENA GOVERNMENT
PROCEEDINGS OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
FRIDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2022
FIRST SITTING OF THE NINTH MEETING

Laid on the Table 25th March 2024

ST. HELENA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE PRESIDENT

The Honourable Cyril Keith Gunnell

EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

The Honourable Attorney General – Mr David Ballantyne

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 Karl Gavin Thrower

The Honourable Andrew James Turner - Overseas

Clerk of Councils

Mrs Connie Johnson

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Friday, 16th December, 2022

The Council met at 10.00 am
in the Council Chamber

(The Honourable Speaker in the Chair)

ORDER OF THE DAY

1. **FORMAL ENTRY OF THE PRESIDENT**

2. **PRAYERS**

(The Rt. Reverend 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 Council Chamber at the Castle, Jamestown, of the proceedings of the Ninth Meeting of St Helena's Legislative Council since the Council was formed in 2021; welcome one and all. We welcome back the Honourable Robert Midwinter and our Clerk of Councils, Mrs Connie Johnson. Both returned last weekend having attended the Fifth Forum on Oversight of Public Finances. Connie also attended the Public Accounts Committees Workshop for Clerks and Officials. Both of these took place in Westminster. Also, the Honourable Gillian Brooks returned last weekend from her medical referral in Pretoria and tomorrow we will see the return of the Honourable Minister Christine Scipio, having represented St Helena at the 40th Celebrations on the Falkland Islands and also the Honourable Minister, Jeffrey Ellick returning from his medical referral in Pretoria. The Honourable Andrew Turner is overseas, having recently married.

This is the last scheduled meeting of the Legislative Council for 2022 prior to the Council going into recess from tomorrow, 17th December. The business of this meeting comprises of eight Sessional Papers to be laid, fourteen Questions for oral response, five Motions and thereafter the Adjournment Debate where Honourable Members can speak on a range of Island issues.

I extend grateful thanks to Bishop Dale Bowers for prayers, SAMS for broadcasting these live proceedings and Mr Merlin George for delivering the Mace.

Our Deputy Speaker, Honourable Cathy Cranfield is listening to these proceedings from home. As I said in my last address, we all look forward to the time she can work alongside of us all

in the Council Chambers. In this regard, I think we were all hoping that progress for wheelchair capable access and disabled toilets would have been a bit further forward than we are at the moment.

Honourable Members, there is a significant amount of business for us to deal with today, including approval of the first Ministerial Code of Conduct, new Standing Orders and new Code of Conduct for members of Legislative Council, so we need to press on. Therefore, I call on the Clerk to announce the first item of business, please.

4. PAPERS

SP 44/2022 – The Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care.

The Speaker –
Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care?

The Hon. Martin Henry (Minister for Health and Social Care) –
Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 44/2022 – St Helena Government - A Bill for an Ordinance - Drugs (Prevention of Misuse) (Amendment) Bill, 2022.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 45/2022 – The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) -
Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 45/2022 entitled Withdrawal Warrant 1, 2021/2022.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 46/2022 – The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) -
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 46/2022 entitled Loan balances recoverable by the St Helena Government, as at 20th June and the 30th of September 2022.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 47/2022 – The Honourable Chief Minister.

The Speaker –
Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –
Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 47/2022 – St Helena Government - Ministerial Code of Conduct.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 48/2022 – The Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Robert Midwinter,

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –
Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 48/2022 - Standing Orders of the Legislative Council.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 49/2022 – The Honourable Gillian Brooks.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Gillian Brooks.

The Hon. Gillian Brooks –
Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 49/2022 - Code of Conduct for the Members of Legislative Council.

Ordered to lie on the table.

SP 50/2022 – The Honourable Chief Minister.

The Speaker –
Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –
Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 50/2022 - Government of St. Helena - Proceedings of the Legislative Council - Friday the 11th of March 2022, First Sitting of the Third Meeting,

Ordered to lie on the table.

The Speaker -
Honourable Members, in accordance with Standing Order, Section 3(a), I put the question that draft record of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council held on Friday, 11th March 2022 be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.

SP 51/2022 - The Honourable Chief Minister,

The Speaker –
Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –
Mr. Speaker, I beg to present Sessional Paper 51/2022- Government of St Helena - Proceedings of the Legislative Council - Tuesday 29th of March 2022 - First Sitting of the Fourth Meeting.

Ordered to lie on the table.

The Speaker -
Honourable Members, in accordance with Standing Order 2, Section 3 (a), I put the question that draft record of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council held on Tuesday, 29th of March 2022 be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker -
Next item of business, please?

5. QUESTIONS

Question No. 1 - The Honourable Robert Midwinter to ask the Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care.

The Speaker –
The Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -
Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care tell this Council what items of essential equipment will his Portfolio be procuring against the recently announced £878,000 additional funding provided by the FCDO and what health concerns are the pieces of essential equipment intended to address?

The Speaker -
Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care?

The Hon. Martin Henry (Minister for Health and Social Care) -
Thank you, Mr Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. It is planned to purchase 21 new pieces of equipment, most of which are replacement and upgraded biomedical lab machines and a one off large purchase of a vastly upgraded CT Scanner. All of these machines are in line with the strategic reconfiguration of the health service in terms of prevention and early protection and include items such as six new ECG machines; currently, there are only two available on island and this will simply help to improve our resilience in this area.

- One biochemistry machine; the biochemistry machine is required to analyse all routine organ function tests, which include heart, kidney, liver and many others. This machine,

the current machine is used on a daily basis and is now proving difficult to maintain due to its age.

- One Fibro Scanner; this will allow us to objectively monitor for liver disease, which currently cannot be detected on routine biochemistry testing. This will be part of our primary prevention and treatment strategy for obesity, diabetes and alcohol dependency. This machine will also help us detect illnesses much earlier and reduce medical referrals.
- One Immunoassay Analyser machine; this machine will increase the range of tests we can do on the island, and, again, we do still need to send away the tests to Cape Town. There are a few others but I'm just pointing out, Honourable Members, the more important ones in line with your question.
 - One blood culture instrument and this will increase the demand for blood cultures and the machine's ability to turn around the tests much sooner. The current machine turns them around in seven days, this machine will allow us within twenty-four hours and we know the issues we can have sometimes in being able to get the best results in a timely manner.
 - And if I just make a quick note of the large piece of equipment that we have planned to purchase, which is one Siemens 128 Slice CT scanner. We currently send many patients to South Africa for diagnosis, which is, which would be more cost effective if we could conduct it on St Helena, a very reasonable purchase in this machine. An on island 128 CT scanner to replace our current 16 slice CT Scanner should help us reduce the number of elected and medevac referrals off island.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Questions, Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Minister for his detailed response. Mr. Speaker, is the Honourable Minister able to say when he anticipates that this equipment is likely to arrive and be in service?

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and thank you, Honourable Member for your follow-up question. It is anticipated that some of the equipment should start to arrive at the end of this financial year.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is he able to confirm that his Portfolio will be able to fully operate and maintain the equipment being procured?

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Yes, I should be able to confirm that this is part of the procurement of, especially like the large CT scanner, also looked at procuring other elements

that goes with it, so it requires minimum maintenance, and it's also part of the procurement, is trying to find a maintenance contract to go with it as well. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is he able to say whether the ongoing maintenance of this equipment will come at an additional cost to the budget and if so, how much has been estimated for this?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

It is likely that some of the equipment will require maintenance and will require extra, some extra funding. However, we are in the process of looking, because we are procuring equipment all from the same supplier, we are in the process of looking if we could consolidate that and bring out a one off maintenance schedule to make it far more efficient when doing so in the future. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the Minister's response, he made reference to the savings that are likely to be generated as a result of not sending people overseas, is he able to say what level of cost savings are likely to be generated as a result of having this equipment?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

I thank the Honourable Member for your question. We will not be able to put full wholesome figures on the table, but obviously, the cost of sending medical referrals overseas per person is quite huge. I mean, just to give an example, just to send one patient off is already 1200 pounds, some of the costs of blood cultures, they cost hundreds and hundreds of pounds, scans cost 2000 pounds etc in some cases, so the accumulated savings from this we feel will surely outstrip the cost of maintaining equipment on island.

The Speaker –

Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank the Honourable Minister for his response to that. I do think it'd be good if we could have some sort of future indication if we could have that.

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister, can you assist?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

It will be somewhat hard to predict this because we can't predict the numbers that we send overseas currently. However, in answers to a few questions data, I will present some of the reasons behind being able to reduce the numbers and will be able to, and because of using early detection as part of our preventative medicine now on island, we should be able to predict the numbers that in future will need medical assistance overseas, so that's all part of the whole package with early diagnosis.

The Speaker –

Thank you, we will look forward to that. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Honourable Minister can't predict what's going to happen in the future, however, we would be able to estimate based on the numbers that have gone that would necessarily not have gone had this equipment been available.

The Speaker –

Your question would be?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter

Is it possible to do some sort of estimate based on historical information?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you Honourable Member, I would prefer that we, or I would prefer to bring back to this house an answer to that question once we start to see the early detection programme, which is planned to start very soon and then we will be able to bring back more firm estimates to the House.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Mr. Speaker, thank you and I thank the Honourable Minister for that response, I'm satisfied with that.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Honourable Member tell us will all these equipment require additional specialist staff to enable the operation?

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Thank you, Mr Speaker, thank you, Honourable Member. No, currently not. The radiographers we have, actually one of the radiographers is already used to using the piece of equipment that

we are procuring, the 128 CT Scanner and the biomedical equipment are largely upgrades and updates to what we currently have and staff members in the laboratory are already used to working with the type of machinery.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, that's very good to hear.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Before we move on to the next item of business, I understand some Members might like to take their jacket off, so we can do that. Unfortunately I have to keep mine on. Okay, next item of business, please?

Question No. 2 – The Honourable Rosemary Bargo to ask the Honourable Chief Minister.

The Speaker –

Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr Speaker, will the Honourable Chief Minister tell this House what has been the outcome of the collective review of social impact assessments resulting from the MOU reforms?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you Councillor Bargo for your question. The social impact assessment of the intended and unintended social consequences of the way the economy is developing in St. Helena was completed in the middle of 2021 and a final draft was presented to all elected members at the time. Many of its recommendations form part of the social policy plan for the island, others have been agreed with Portfolio Directorates for consideration for adoption. Current implementation of recommendations includes the updating of the minimum income standard, MIS, and a situational analysis of the situation of low income families. Next year, it is planned to review minimum rights and protections in the Employment Ordinance, which currently do not have regulations. The social impact assessment is available on the SHG website. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Chief Minister. Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo-

Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Speaker –

Nothing further? Next item of business, please?

Question No. 3 – 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 –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this Council what proposals are the St Helena Government considering that will benefit a continued air service to and from St Helena?

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I must confess I am struggling to understand what information my Honourable Friend is trying to extract from this question. May I ask that he just gives a bit more detail and what he's trying to get out of the question, please?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I'm looking for Mr. Speaker is, will the air service be continuing for St Helena; where it will be going, what will be the hub and that sort of information?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, sounds reasonable. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question and I thought it was on the context of those sort of lines, so I have prepared some notes based on the information that I think the Honourable Member would appreciate from his question. So, as you know, I think, as well as the listening public, myself, the Chief Minister and the Financial Secretary did go on to discuss this on the radio; I think both stations, only last month, and what we discussed is the possibility to explore providing a Cape Town based service for the southern hemisphere season, so that would be obviously around this time of year, so what we call the peak season. So we did outline in those radio interviews and in the press release that was issued last month that the reason why this can't be done or it can't be done soon is because they need to work with the Regulatories. Airlink is obviously governed by the South Africa Civil Aviation Authority and they are working with them to address this issue and what it is, it is the requirements around the crew and particularly how many hours they, sort of, are actually flying and all the rest hours before the flight and, sort of, after the flight. So they are working with the South African Aviation Authority and we hoped that we would have an update from this in the New Year. So going on to about Airlink and the contractual agreement, so the current Air Service Agreement with Airlink expires in October 2024. Given the very limited pool of airlines that could technically operate to St Helena, SHG, so what I'm trying to say here, Mr Speaker, there are very few airlines that have the capability of flying to our airport. So we are working very closely with Airlink and our Aviation Advisors to secure a longer term contract for the air service provision to provide the certainty to our community and our potential visitors that there would be an air schedule in place. So we are hoping to have an agreement on this

within the first half of next year. In addition, consideration is also being given to increase the frequency of flights in the peak periods of 2023/24, so this is next season and we are looking to see if we can get in another flight mid-week, but work is still being done with this and we need to have conversations with all the key stakeholders. So Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to give my Honourable Friend and the listening public some numbers that might be of interest. So, since the opening of the airport in 2016, commercial scheduled flights didn't start happening until 2017, so I'm counting over the last five years and since then, we have had approximately 31,500 passengers use our airport and that is a mixture of obviously tourists, visiting friends and family as well as government personnel and other people that come to work on the island. In addition to this, this service has also provided since 2016 sixty-three medical evacuations. Now, this would have not been possible to do without an airport, so those are some of the highlights of having air access to the island as opposed to the ship that would normally take five days to reach Cape Town. Also, on top of this, we have assisted, we have helped Ascension, assisted with a technical stop for their aero medical evacuation and since the opening of the airport there have been nine medical evacuations from Ascension.

Mr. Speaker, looking ahead what I'll be doing, well, I'll try to sum this up in seven bullet points.

- So we are working with Airlink to reintroduce a midweek flight, which will offer different lengths of stay and options for visitors.
- We are in the midst of rolling out a tourism marketing plan, which will also be published in January in order to increase awareness of St Helena as a destination and also to secure bookings for the flights.
- We're also rolling out brand St Helena which will give the destination a clear and cohesive identity in the global marketplace.
- We are increasing the number of tour operators selling St Helena, particularly those that can bring in small groups.
- We are also increasing the yachts that is arrival and we hope to expand on this as a new, as an additional stream of revenue that, so far, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, I think has been underutilized.
- We are developing a more attractive sorry, we are developing more activities and events in the offseason periods of the year to try and keep tourists coming in the winter months and those kind of events would be things like festival walking, festival running, we're trying to look at some more, sort of, endurance sports, some more, sort of..... My Honourable Friend, Mr Henry, Minister Henry here will be quite, you know, for some mountain bike tours and stuff like that, just to try and increase the product that we are offering here on the island.
- And, on top of that, Sir, we are trying to facilitate training and upskilling programs for those who are working in the tourism industry, so those are the things that we are doing and I hope that has given enough details for my Honourable Friend. Thank you.

The Speaker –

A very comprehensive answer. Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to ask one thing, is the St Helena Government considering Europe in their continued air service?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are trying to increase our tourism product globally. If there is interest from other airlines to fly here from Europe, then why not? Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Honourable Minister state if consideration has also been given to the impact that Airlink gaining the Fifth Freedom Rights in Namibia may have on enhancing the air service provided to St Helena?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question and the short answer is yes, we are working with Airlink, but, again, there is some regulatory requirements to be met by having another stop because we are only regulated for three stops and this would include adding an additional stop, so that is something that we are working with Airlink on.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

I thank the Honourable Minister for that response. Can he give some indication of when he's likely to be able to say something more definitive on that matter, please?

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

It's hard for me to put a date on there, but we are working very closely with Airlink, and, as I said, we've been trying to increase the tourism product by offering different lengths of stay in the southern hemisphere for tourists that would like to come from the northern hemisphere and I think in all of these discussions, we will be discussing freedom rights and the possibility of having another stop, so I think by middle of next year, we might be in a better position to give an update to this House and to the public. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Any further questions? Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Would the Honourable Member just state if it's still the same status regarding if another airline wants to fly and utilize the airport, that there is still nothing stopping, with all of these changes that we currently have, there is nothing stopping another airline from saying I want to test for an air service from, say, Europe to the airport and there's nothing to prevent that?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. Providing that they meet all the requirements and all the regulations, there is nothing stopping any other airline, commercial airlines or freight airlines from calling in St Helena. We have an Open Skies Policy.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Next item of business, please.

Question No. 4 – The Honourable Karl Thrower to ask the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker -

Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development tell this Council, what are the main stages and the implementation time frame for getting high speed internet connections to people's homes and businesses?

The Speaker -

Thank you. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and, again, I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question and as my Honourable Ronald Coleman's question, we have been out and tried to give the public regular updates on this issue as well. So, again, myself and the Financial Secretary did a update on both radios, I think early in November, and then myself, Financial Secretary and the Chief Minister went and gave another update only recently, but I will go over it again, Sir. What has been done, and I will try to explain a bit, because I know there has been a bit of confusion from the public with regards to the different lots. So, my Honourable Friend will be aware that in November SHG signed a contract with Maestro Technology St Helena for the design, build and transfer of DBT, of a passive and active telecommunications infrastructure network. This has been referred to in the radio interviews and in the press releases as Lot One and Lot Two.

Lot One was for a design, build and transfer of a passive network which includes the rollout of fibre optic network to over 80% of the properties on the island along with a gigabyte capacity of wireless linked to reach the remainder properties within the scope of the project. So planning is currently being detailed, but it's likely that the first premises will be physically connected in June/July of next year, but the service cannot start until the end of 2023 which will tie into the year's extension to the current providers licence.

So, Lot Two is for a DBT of an active network, which is the requirement to provide connectivity on a fibre passive network and to supply the wholesale services which will be Lot Three, which will provide the Internet and Voice telecommunication services. This will all also include connection to the cable landing station and ultimately to our cable that is obviously linked to Portugal and South Africa. So the services of Lot One and Lot Two, which we could talk about them as a combined service now, they will end by a physical drop fibre to each premises, and that's for the ones that was receiving fibre to the premises and for some of those properties in the outermost regions of the island they will end by having a box or receiver on the property that will receive the microwave transmission.

So, on top of this network, there will be a service provider and that will be Lot Three, so that will be basically the company that will be supplying the internet, who you'd be paying the bills to and who you'd be calling up if you have issues with customer service and so on. So, that company will hopefully, well, will mount the services on top of what we are building now as in Lot One and Lot Two. It is expected that they will then issue a rotor, or whatever means it might be, to the client or to the customer to be installed inside the property and then that will be connected obviously to this part that we're building now, which is the drop link to the box outside if we are delivering full fibre cable or to the transmission box which would be outside of the house. So this form of distribution will be used to provide internet, also telephone and TV services all round up in the Lot Three, whoever applies for service for the Lot Three part of this contract. So, I would say that, probably to continue on that, that Lot Three is out now, the tender process has started, it started last month and the closure date is January, so once the service provider has been selected, they will then work with Lot One and Lot Two contractors, Maestro, to start mounting the services on the passive and active network pretty much at the same time and that will give us what hopefully will give us the ability to deliver this project in the very short timeframe that we are doing. It is quite ambitious and I will not deny that, but this is an ambitious government and we want to try and move the island forward, so we have to reach for what many might think is a bit unreachable, but we have to strive to do better, we have to strive to do the best that we can.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, that sort of is all of my notes that I have and I don't know if the Honourable Friend has any additional question, but I hope that explains a bit better of how the service will operate and how it will be built. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you, I'm sure he will take up your invitation, Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'd like to thank my Honourable Friend for that very precise answer, which I think the clarity would Could he just say when the mobile telephone system will also be included in the same Lots, the same process, so will the mobile telephone network also change hands 1st January 2024.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his supplementary question, and, yes, the intention is, all services will go live 1st January 2024.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister just confirm for the listening public, that the infrastructure that's being installed in Lot One and Lot Two, will come at no cost to the end customer, the residential household owner?

The Speaker -

Thank you. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question and it was a good question, because I think it is important that the listening public knows that the reason why SHG is building a network so it gives us every opportunity to pass on the benefits to the customer, so, I think that would answer your question, that, yes, we are not anticipating that this get passed on, we are anticipating that we absorb the cost and we are looking for other means and ways of paying for this infrastructure cost.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Nothing further? Next item of business then, please?

Question No. 5 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –

Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development explain to this House why plots at the Bottom Woods Comprehensive Development Area have not yet been made available for purchase by the public for house building?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. So, Comprehensive Development Areas, or CDAs, as we refer to them, are areas of land identified for development within the Land Development Control Plan, or LDCP and that Plan runs from 2012 to 2022, so it was the current plan and members of the public are welcome to go and see that on the Government website. So, the idea of this is to have optimal use of the land available and we are trying to shift to a more sustainable community and to establish developments in one area will allow us to do this more controllably. The Bottom Woods CDA is set out in three phases for connection to the existing infrastructure.

- So Phase One is estimated to be 14 plots with four Government Landlord Houses to be constructed under this Phase.
- Phase Two is for thirteen plots and
- Phase Three is for five parcels.

The project start date was March 2020. To date in Phase One, we have done all the site clearing, we've marked out and exaction has been done, all telecommunications, water and sewage infrastructure is complete, curbing and pavements have been installed, slipper drains have been completed, one Government Landlord house is now being occupied and has been since October 2021 and the second Government Landlord house is waiting completion of the road contract which will then allow occupation or allow somebody to occupy the house and this is envisaged that this will be available around about 20th December. So the road construction and resurfacing are approximately 70% complete, but I must confess during this project there were some major delays. We have experienced, sort of, well, we've experienced or the contractor has experienced procurement issues when ordering pipe fittings, pipework, feeder pillars and other materials due to an international material shortage as a consequence of the Covid

pandemic and everyone was in lockdown. There's been some other delays experienced from some of the road base materials and not being able to procure that, but thankfully that has been sorted now so we do have enough road materials coming in for this and on top of that last year we did have quite a bad winter, so some of the excavations and that was, sort of, held up by continuous rain and heavy rain, so it is anticipated, and this is the good news, so that the plots will be marked for the public or perhaps the plots will be marketed to the public in early 2023, so, yes, I would say anyone that's interested in buying one of those plots to look at early 2023 and they should be available.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

I thank the Honourable Minister for his response, but, with respect, it does not actually answer my question. My specific question is why have the plots not been made available for purchase, so can I, in a nutshell, please have an explanation as to why the plots have not yet been made available; what precisely remains to be done before they can be made available? Thank you.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Mark Yon –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Sorry, I thought I did give that answer within my question, so I think the delay, you're asking for the delay, was to do with the contractor and not being able to get the necessary materials here on the Island and then there was difficulty in ordering this because, like I said, the world went through lockdown, all the businesses and that around the world shut down and then when they reopened there was a shortage of material because of the demand. I think the other delays, as I said, was basically there was some delays with the road base material, which would have been a separate procurement and also the weather delayed some of the excavations to some of the, well, some of the works that was done. Sorry, was there another part to that question you wanted?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Can I respond on a point of information, Mr Speaker?

The Speaker –

Sit down, please. Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you. What is not clear is what precisely had to be put in place before the plots could be sold and why that was not put in place? You've talked about materials, you mentioned road materials, okay, that I accept, that does answer my question in part, but what other materials, because as far as I'm aware all that was required, and if I may continue on a point of information.

The Speaker –

Please go ahead.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

I was Deputy Chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee which was responsible for oversight of this project up to the General Election and as far as I was aware all that was required was the services and site works to be put into the area before plots would be released to the public or, at least, made available to the public. If that situation has changed, then I would like an explanation as to what has changed and - if it hasn't then what I was seeking was precise information about why the requirements needed to be put in place for the plots to be released have not been put in place up to this date. That's what I was seeking, I was not asking anything about Government Landlord houses and excavation of plots for Government building purposes or anything of that nature. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister, so why plots at the Bottom Woods Comprehensive Development Area have not yet been made available, that was the question?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question, but I don't know, maybe, maybe by saying that we are offering these plots fully serviced would help because the things that I talked about, the pipe work, the feeder pillars and all of that is to do with putting in the services for the plots, so, so far today, we have spent around £20,000 on clearing, clearing the sites, on water and sewage and electricity divisions, the plot excavations have already taken place and that has cost us around £30,000 and the roads and services has, this is before the storm drains and stuff like that, has cost around £180,000, so there is, there is quite a bit of work going on these and I know that it has been delayed, but like I said earlier, we are hoping to get these plots marketed in early 2023, so it shouldn't be too long now.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Doctor Essex and thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'm glad that we did get there in the end. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Getting there in the end is always a good thing. Any further questions? Yes, Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Honourable Minister say whether the Bottom Woods development area sewage system is still tied in with the build of the Prison, because originally they were going to share the same sewage farm?

The Speaker –

Yes, I think I can allow that question. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

So, I'm kinda going to be speaking on, because none of this has been finally decided yet, so I'm going to speak as if what I would want to see happen with this development.

The Speaker -

Be as brief as you can, please.

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Okay. So I think, yes, we have adequate sewage for a number of plots, if not all of the plots, but when we do get to the stage of filling the prison and putting in a sewage system, a modern system for the prison, then it is anticipated that some of these plots, if not all of them will feed into that same sewage system. The idea of that is to reduce environmental impact.

The Speaker –

Thank you for that explanation. All's well? Thank you very much. Next item of business, please?

Question No. 6 – The Honourable Robert Midwinter to ask the Honourable Chief Minister.

The Speaker –

Honourable Robert Midwinter?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Honourable Chief Minister tell this Council what progress has been made towards enabling the development of a temporary work placement scheme, as raised in this House on the 29th of March 2022.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank the Honourable Robert Midwinter for his question. Further to the response given to the House on the 15th of June 2022 in respect of developing a work scheme for the unemployed, a meeting was convened on the 1st of September 2022 to determine the way forward. During the meeting, interest was expressed in re-establishing the previous work scheme or a program similar with the intention that unemployed individuals in receipt of benefits can have the opportunity to develop skills in a workplace setting. Following the meeting on the 1st of September, it was agreed that the next step was to seek legal guidance to gain some clarity around what approach could be undertaken. Advice was subsequently provided and it became apparent that there were a number of areas where further consideration was required. For example, consideration would need to be given to finding employment status, confidentiality, eligibility, impacts on benefits, placement specifics, police checks and references, to name a few. Given a project of this nature, it is important that careful consideration is given to the structure and content of such a scheme so as to ensure that the scheme is legally compliant, but also to ensure that participants derive maximum benefit. Following the provision of that legal advice, we intend to convene a further meeting in early January to discuss the legal advice in more detail and to start developing the logistics structure and content of a new work scheme. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'd like to thank the Chief Minister for her response. Is she able to say if there are any changes required to the existing legislation?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas -

Thank you for your follow up question. It is very likely that there will have to be some changes, because at the moment the legal document does not give a clear legislative distinction between an employee and a worker within the Employment Rights Act 1996.

The Speaker -

Thank you.

The Hon. Julie Thomas -

Sorry, can I just add one more?

The Speaker -

Go ahead.

The Hon. Julie Thomas -

And then also, when looking at the employment legislation, we might need to make changes also to the Employment Rights Ordinance 2010 which does not make the distinction either. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I'd just like to again thank the Chief Minister for her response, because in her initial response she did actually address my other question over when this is likely to be progressed.

The Speaker -

Understood. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister indicate exactly what she is hoping will be the output from the meeting in January?

The Speaker -

Thank you. Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas -

I'd like to thank the Honourable Dr. Essex for her question. I think when we have the meeting in January and we can better understand how the structures work legally, we would be able to better talk about how we take this forward and in respect of how it benefits the individual, but also what impact it could have on Government, so I think our meeting in January will help us to determine that knowing that at the moment there's no, there's no clarity as to the difference between those two, the employee and the worker, as I said before.

The Speaker -

Thank you. Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

I thank the Honourable Chief Minister. Can she please state what will be the next steps following the meeting in January?

The Speaker –
Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas -
Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as soon as we can determine those things, then if it is that we need to update the legislation, etc, then we'll do that, but I think we need the legal advice first to see if those are the two pieces of legislation that is paramount, obviously, but if there's other things that we need to do, and, of course, it will come with budgetary constraints as well, so we need to understand exactly if there's funding available for such a scheme also.

The Speaker –
Thank you. Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Can the Honourable Chief Minister please state whether legal advice has already been sought on this issue?

The Speaker –
Thank you. Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –
Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did mention in my response that, yes, we are liaising with the AGs Chambers at the present, hence we know that those are the two pieces of legislation that we will look at in our January meeting, and then we'll progress from there.

The Speaker –
Thank you very much. Next item of business, please?

Question No. 7 – The Honourable Rosemary Bargo to ask the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –
Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –
Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, may I rise on a point of information. My question to the Honourable Minister was - why has the project completion report for the Fish Processing Factory not yet been provided to elected members. Since then, the report has been provided to all elected members as marked as confidential. Thank you.

The Speaker -
Thank you, I think I know where you are coming from. Honourable Minister, do you wish to respond to that at all? Is there anything you can say?

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) -
Not really, Sir. I'd just like to apologise to the Members for the time it has taken to produce this report and share it with Members, but as all Members know, there was a very good explanation why it took that time.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Did you actually read the question out? Okay, and you've carried on with the point of information. No, that's fine, thank you very much. Any further questions on that? 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 what is the situation with regards to maintaining a regular shipping service for St Helena?

The Speaker -

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

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. But, again, Mr Speaker, I find this a little bit confusing, because we have been on the radio again, twice, to talk about shipping and there's been a number of press releases and we are working with the merchants very closely to give them updates and also the Chamber of Commerce is also playing a big part in trying to reach out and connect all the merchants, the smaller merchants, and giving them updates. I suppose, what further can I say? I mean, we have received some proposals for an interim arrangement and I think we've already said that we were due to receive these, but there's nothing more I can talk about with that, Sir, because these proposals are still being evaluated, but all I would say is that what we're working with is to have an interim arrangement in place after the last scheduled voyage of the MV Helena, which is in January, and we're hoping that the new service will start working or start operating in February and should arrive to the island in early March. Because obviously, there's some work to do with all the consolidating and trans-shipment before the actual sailing of the new service as well. So, I think I will just finish by saying, Sir, that, we are working very hard to ensure that the service offers similar or possible, cheaper freight and that is a big task to do, because what we have been importing, historically, over the last year is a very small amount of cargo and to just give some context to this, we have averaged importing 60 containers and less than 300 tonnes of break bulk. Now, if you consider a ship that needs to obviously have all the requirements that it needs to travel here, it is very difficult for us to get the price as cheap as possible, when you only have to spread the cost over a very small amount of cargo, but we are confident that what the service will offer going forward will be very similar, and I will stick my neck out here, and say a little bit, in some cases it might be a little cheaper when you talk about the different imports of cargo than the current shipping service that we have in place, but, like I said, Mr Speaker, we are still evaluating the tenders and we will hope to give an update to the public before the end of this year.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can I just rise on a point of information? A couple of weeks ago, I was approached by a merchant because their suppliers in the UK were not accepting their orders because they didn't know what the shipping situation. So I would like to know, when did the Minister know that Andrew Weir wasn't renewing their contract?

The Speaker -

I see a lot of nodding of heads as that question was being asked, so, therefore, I think an answer ought to be given. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

So again, Mr. Speaker, we have been on the radio and we have talked about this to the public and this was in the press release that was released, so, to be honest, we was, we was given confirmation in the later part of October, so that is, what, some six weeks ago, so I think what we have done in that short amount of time is a huge amount of work and I think that we should be, I think, commending the Financial Secretary here and his team for basically working on this, I think also in his off time, to try and get a service that is suitable for the island's needs going forward. So I think I've basically given that update to the public a couple of times. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Ronald Coleman, you asked what is the situation, you were given the situation, I see you want to ask another question, please do so.

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Sorry. Mr Speaker, I'd just like to thank the Minister for his reply.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Nothing further? Next item of business, please?

Question No. 9 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs.

The Speaker -

Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Mr Speaker, before I read this question, can I preface it with a point of information?

The Speaker -

You may do so.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Before I'm told, more than probably in your response, that this has already been said on the radio and published in various formats, I would just like to state that the reasons for asking questions in this Honourable House, which have already been aired and communicated to the public is because when they're asked in this environment they become part of formal record, they are recorded in Hansard and that is a formal response and a formal record. Things that are said on the radio or in interviews or debates outside of this Honourable House do not necessarily have the same weight and that is the reason why a number of questions are simply

asked on key issues in this Honourable House will be ones that have already been addressed elsewhere, so with that explanation, Mr Speaker, I would now like to read the question.

The Speaker –

Noted, Honourable Member. Carry on with your question.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Will the Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs tell this House what are the next steps required to finalise the Immigration Policy and get any necessary changes made to primary legislation, and by when is it envisaged that this process will be completed?

The Speaker -

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs?

The Hon. Martin Henry (Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs) -

Thank you, Mr Speaker. As the point of contact for Mr Ellick's Portfolio, I will provide a response which he has agreed in principle. However, as Members will be aware, the public consultation was shared among other Ministers to support the process and for all of us to gain an appreciation of the public sentiment. I would therefore ask, Mr Speaker, that these Ministers are allowed to support and provide responses to any supplementary questions given.

The Speaker –

By all means.

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. As Honourable Dr Essex and other elected members will know, through their attendance in a number of meetings, the public consultation on the proposed updates to the draft Immigration Policy has been completed, although we are still accepting feedback until the end of this year. However, we still aim to bring back the updated version to elected members by February 2023. Once updated, the Policy will go to elected members with the intention to publish it to the community using various means, including further engagement, so that they are aware of the revised policy, which takes into account people's views and provide further feedback to them if necessary. I am unable, however, to give a precise timeline for when the policy and legislation will be completed as it will require support from elected members and the Attorney General's office, but I would like to envisage that the Policy and legislation will be finalised by April 2023. Honourable Members may be interested to learn that over 170 people attended the public consultations in November and as part of the wider works on the policy, we will provide an overview of the questions raised during those meetings and how many people attended these sessions. These should be published on the SHG website and other media outlets in the New Year. I would just like to thank the community for their participation in the consultation and for them to continue to provide their views on the draft updates when they become available.

The Speaker

Thank you, Honourable Member. Does any other Minister wish to contribute towards that answer? No? No further questions? Thank you. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to ask the Honourable Minister is he in a position to say what changes are now likely to be made for the draft consulted upon as a result of the feedback received from the public?

The Speaker -

Are you able to do that, Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Martin Henry -

I'm sorry, Honourable Member, but not at this stage. Until all the information has been consolidated and feedback is recorded and handed back to the Minister then we will not be able to make any further comment at this stage.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Will the Honourable Minister give a commitment that the next round of discussions or consultations will be expedited as soon as possible so that this matter can be brought to a conclusion?

The Speaker -

Fair question, Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Martin Henry -

I will give the commitment for the other Minister, yes, I think that the work that has been done so far and I think we all appreciate that we need to push forward immigration policy as a matter of urgency and I am sure that Minister Ellick will push this forward as soon as he possibly can.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to raise in support of Minister Henry, standing in for Minister Ellick, but also to say, immigration and growing our population etc, is also part of our vision and strategy for St Helena to help us to grow our economy, so we are very mindful that we need the Immigration Policy out as soon as we possibly can, but taking into consideration the views of the community, so just wanted to reiterate that. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you. I also rise in support of Minister Henry, and like said, we've all participated in helping with the consultation on this policy in Minister Ellick's absence. And I'm pleased to say, just to give an update to the public, that this round of consultation attracted almost double the amount of people that the last round did, so that is very encouraging for me to see that people are still very much interested in immigration here on this island and I think the consultation did weed out some interesting questions, Sir, and I think we're all looking forward to seeing how that translates into the new policy or the new draft policy once all the information has been collated, so I'd just like to say that. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. I don't see any other Ministers who will be able to support, but thank you very much. Are we done on that question? Next item of business, please.

Question No. 10 – The Honourable Robert Midwinter to ask the Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care.

The Speaker –

The Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care tell this Council what key areas of health concerns were identified by the UK HAS Team during their recent visit and how does his Portfolio intend to address these?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care.

The Hon. Martin Henry (Minister for Health and Social Care) -

Thank you, Mr Speaker and thank you, Honourable Member, for your question. You would think that Minister Brooks wrote this answer because it's a bit long.

So, the overall report was very supportive of the work that Health and Social Care Portfolio has undertaken since the new management with the below introduction statement. A huge amount of work has been undertaken over recent months in the Health and Care system in St Helena to ensure that the island is able to respond to any potential surges of Covid 19 related demand from reopening the borders and also to resolve some long-standing complex staffing issues. The Senior Leadership team that is now in place, Minister Martin Henry, Tracy Poole-Nandy, Dr Peter Moss and Dr Derek Burke have all done a remarkable job in addressing some of these long-standing issues and challenges, identifying others that still need to be addressed and in focusing their collective leadership efforts on the quality of care being delivered. The main issues were identified; firstly, the high levels of preventable disease on the island, and sorry if my answers overlap further questions but they all focus at the same principles. To address these, we are proposing to set up a new streaming service for chronic disease, metabolic disease and Child Health along with disease, disability and screening register. These will each have a preventative and treatment arm to address the underlying causes of the disease which was identified in the joint strategic needs assessment as smoking, alcohol abuse, obesity, diabetes, and hypertension. The second point raised was workforce and looked at training, skill mix and regulations. Attracting clinical staff to the island is extremely challenging and work is underway to link other health care centres with the view of having rotational staff. Provision for more vocational orientated training is required, we have access to NHS E learning, which can provide us with some of this training and we envisage sorting others through collaboration. Dr. Moss and Dr. Burke are reviewing the current regulations framework in collaboration with other members in the team.

Our IT system. We are in the process of reviewing the current clinical system with the view of reducing the number and moving to a Cloud based system when the cable becomes available. Governance system. We have a new Head of Governance who is reviewing the current governance structure to include the review, update, rationalization and standardization of policies and procedures; where necessary, new policies will be produced. The Head of Governance will also review the current audit program and make recommendations for future

audit functions. Health's Senior Management Team are reviewing the governance structure required to deliver the health and social care agenda over the coming years.

- The Pharmacy Service - The Pharmacy Project is underway with the medical supplies procurement component nearly completed. General consumable procurement has been combined for Health and Social Care with the aim of reducing costs and wastage.
- Overseas medical referrals - We are currently procuring this service and we are using our experience of the current service to inform our procurement.
- Emergency preparedness - We are working with the Resilience Forum on this element. The report was complimentary of the high level of commitment from both a political and strategical approach to preventable health care issues, which included the following statements. It is critically important that the strategy does not become a sickness strategy alone, i.e. one that focuses only on health care delivery, but one which is driven by primary and secondary preventative programs. St Helena needs to shift its focus to a system predicated on prediction and prevention, rather than diagnose and treat.

I would like to, I would like personally to thank this Government for the political and financial support needed to kick-start these absolutely essential programs in Health and Social Care. However, we also must understand that the results of the strategies being put in place today are long term and some beyond the term of our office. However, without future support to imbed these strategies, plan and services, the service will not cope with the inevitable future for its demand. This is absolutely clear.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Minister for his very detailed response. Mr. Speaker, is the Honourable Minister able to say what additional funding will be required in order to deliver the recommendations made and where this funding is likely to come from?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, thank you, Honourable Member. As we all know, we have just finished three days of BAM budgetary proceedings, our initial BAM budgetary proceedings, and I have presented my case to the team. We will not know the outcome from that immediately, but we will, all of us will know in the very near future how far my presentation and my team's presentation has in pushing our agenda.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Next item of business, please?

Question No. 11 – The Honourable Ronald Coleman to ask the Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care tell this Council what improvements have been made within the St Helena Health Service since the approval of the £13.9m in this year's budget?

The Speaker

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care.

The Hon. Martin Henry (Minister for Health and Social Care) –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member and I apologise in advance for some of the overlap to the answers because they are overlapping with the previous answer.

The Speaker –

You did explain that earlier on, so go ahead.

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Okay. So, the Government of St. Helena summary budget, budget expenditure and revenue for 2022/23 gives a forecast estimate for Health and Social Care of £5.847m and £3.465m respectively. The period from April to October was spent almost completely on preparing, on planning, preparing and managing the COVID outbreak, which ran from the beginning of September to mid October 2022. There was 1,800 positive cases of Covid 19 which equates to about 3,600 individuals in the population contracting the virus, given that half the population would have not shown any symptoms. There were no deaths attributed to Covid 19 and no hospitalisation for treatment of Covid 19. Projects we have worked on during this period also include, as I mentioned earlier, the Pharmacy project, which is still in progress and made up of a number of phases, including medicine, procurement, centralisation of general stock, reorganization of records, storage facilities and stock distribution.

The joint strategic needs assessment provided a clear direction for health to address the five risk factors leading to early death and illness in the population. Health is in the process of reconfiguring the services and addressing the prospectus. We have already commenced aorta/aneurysm programme and will commence trial screening programmes in early 2023. We will introduce long cancer screening programs in early 2023. We will introduce lung cancer screening programs to run alongside our smoking cessation programs and will be enhancing our current cervical and breast cancer screening programs. The strategy to address the joint needs assessment will combine preventative and primary care with early detection and high quality management where prevention has not been successful. The joint approach will bring a majority of benefits to the population and will result in fewer earlier deaths and fewer years of illness before that. This approach will lead to a reduction in Health Care's expenditure by managing chronic diseases and will also impact quite significantly on overseas medical budgets.

The procurement of a new medical services overseas is progressing with Dr Peter Moss just returning from South Africa to review the services provided by the shortlist providers. We have used lessons learned, as I said earlier, from the previous contracts to inform this.

The new Mortuary and Chapel project is progressing and we are now doing an estates review and a estates review is now underway to ensure that the estates is fit for purpose for the future. This review will inform future estates projects.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much Honourable Member. Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you, Mr Speaker, just to say to thank the Minister for that reply, but just a little question is, was Cape Town included in any of that medical review?

The Speaker -

Honourable Minister, can you answer that?

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'm sorry at this present moment while it's still in shortlisting process, I cannot go any further into those details.

The Speaker -

Okay, thank you. Thank you, Honourable Member. No further questions, oh, yes, there is. Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr Speaker, noting that an increased level of budget was provided to support his Portfolio through the opening of the island to COVID, can the Minister for Health and Social Care say whether or not he's satisfied with current post COVID staffing levels at the hospital?

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Martin Henry

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you for your question. Yes, I can confirm that we are satisfied with the staffing levels at present. However, there are a number of additional staff that was brought in for the Covid related outbreak.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that actually comes nicely to my next question as to whether he has any plans to either increase or decrease staffing levels within his Portfolio now that we have got through our first wave of Covid?

The Speaker -

Okay, I see where you're coming from. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Martin Henry -

There will be a number of staff members that will be, after the six months and one year contract, as I said earlier, in relation to the Covid 19 strategy to open the island.

The Speaker -

Okay, thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank the Honourable Minister for his further response. Is he satisfied that we are currently fully prepared for a second or subsequent wave of Covid?

The Speaker –
Interesting. Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Martin Henry –
Thank you for your question, Honourable Member, and, yes, we are satisfied that we are prepared. We are using the lessons learned from the opening of this phase and all of this information has not gone away, it is being used now for our preparedness for our second, which we actually predict will happen. We do also predict that it will happen and the peak of the wave actually should be lower than the first one we had. This is based on current statistics received throughout the rest of the world.

The Speaker –
Okay, thank you very much. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -
Again, Mr Speaker, I'd just like to thank the Honourable Minister for that clarification. I mean it's important the public hears as well.

The Speaker –
Thank you very much. Next item of business, please?

Question No. 12 – The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Speaker –
Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, will the Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development update this House regarding what has transpired since August 2022 and next steps relating to the construction of a new prison?

The Speaker –
Thank you very much. Honourable Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development.

The Hon. Mark Brooks (Minister for Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development) -
Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question and also the earlier explanation as to why some of the questions have been asked here in the House when the public has been given updates in other forums and I would just like to say, Mr. Speaker, whether I give information in a Press Release, on the radio or in this House, it carries the same weight with me as a Minister.

So, all Members will be aware, that the updates provided at the previous Legislative Council meeting whereby it was explained that it was only agreed last year for the new prison to be funded from the EDIP programme and SHG has been progressing this project to ensure that construction commence in accordance with the development permission conditions, and I did talk about this last time, but I said that we have five years to start construction from the time the outline application was approved. So, Mr Speaker, however, due to capacity constraints, consultancy service will be used to produce the detailed design and be responsible for the

construction supervision of the project and terms of reference are being developed for this and on that basis, a proposal was approved by the EDIP Review Group for a prison to be progressed through a design and build route. This should provide a quicker and potentially cheaper route to building a new prison. So the terms of reference have been drafted for design and build consortium, however, it is recognised that the terms of reference would need to be robust and significantly detailed to ensure that the tenderers submit bids that respond to fall of SHG's requirements, which will mitigate the potential litigation and so on, resulting in a significant, sort of, hopefully improvements to obviously what is now the current prison. So, SHG has been working with MOJ, so the Ministry of Justice in the UK, and they have provided us assistance and has supplied SHG with the full specification and details of a category C prison. And, Mr Speaker, that was the important part, we want to build a prison that is fit to the regulations for all the requirements, but also that meets the needs of St Helena. So these specifications are now being reviewed by SHG to establish what is required for progressing the new prison on St Helena, ensuring that it is fit for purpose, as I said, for the Prison Service here on island. I think I can just end by finally saying what I did earlier, which is that the new prison remains a priority for this government and has been identified as a strategic priority for Phase 2 of the Economic Development Committee. So for us, as the government, it's a priority, and also for the Committee that I sit on, the High Level Panel Group, the EDIP Programme, it's a priority for us. So that should give us some reassurance that, you know, we are working towards getting this prison built.

So, we're hoping that if everything goes well with the design and build tender and we receive bids that will enable us to sign a contract and move forward with this project, we are hoping that the new prison will be completed by 2026, if not, soon after. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much for that. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker and thanks to the Honourable Minister for his response. When is the design, build and tender process likely to be concluded?

The Speaker -

Honourable Minister?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. I can't put a set date on when it's likely to be concluded, I'm not sure how long the tender process is envisaged to last for, but I can get this update and provide to my Honourable Friend.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Can the Honourable Minister confirm what tranche of EDIP funding will be used for the construction of the prison?

The Speaker -

'Thank you. Honourable Minister, what tranche?'

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for her question. This will be in Phase 2 of the EDIP Programme and, as I know, there has been, I think, some high level figures thrown around of about £5m, but we can't confirm this until we receive the tenders

from the design and construction for the contractors that would be bidding in for that, Sir, so until that happens we won't be able to know the final price, but give a, sort of, average price of what was envisaged for this new prison that will be in the region of four to five million pounds. Thank you, Sir.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. No further questions?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

I'd like to thank the Honourable Minister and state that on this occasion his response was spot on in providing the information that I required, so I'm grateful for that. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Nothing further I don't think after that. Well, its five past twelve now, so we didn't start until half past ten this morning, so we've done very well to get to this stage. However, I do think it is time now for us to be having lunch and so we will adjourn and come back at, say, ten minutes past two, ten minutes past one, yeah, I don't want to give you two hours, ten minutes past one, please. Thank you very much.

Council Adjourned

Council Resumed

The Speaker –

Well, thank you all very much. You've had some lunch and fortified now and ready to go again. I've just had some information that SAMS, they said they're hearing some hissing on the system, nothing they can do about it.

And before we get started on anything else, whilst I was welcoming everybody this morning, Mr Ballantyne, I didn't welcome you, I'm very sorry about that. But David Ballantyne is our new Attorney General, been here for, how long now is it? About six weeks, so I missed remembering to welcome you, but, anyway, welcome onboard. Want to say anything at all?

The Hon. David Ballantyne (Attorney General) -

Just thank you for that welcome and I'll be glad to assist you in any way that's appropriate. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. So, next item of business, please, Clerk?

6.

MOTIONS

Motion No. 1 – The Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care.

THE DRUGS (PREVENTION OF MISUSE) (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2022

The Speaker –

Honourable Minister for Health and Social Care?

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Drugs (Prevention of Misuse) (Amendment) Bill, 2022 be approved in principle and referred to a committee of the whole Council.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Is there a seconder to the Motion? Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas – (Chief Minister) –

Mr. Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Mover, you may now speak to the Motion.

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, the Drugs (Prevention of Misuse) (Amendment) Bill, 2022 is here before this House. As you are aware, Honourable Councillor Andrew Turner raised a Motion in the House on the 15th June 2022 sitting of Legislative Council that the Safety, Security and Home Affairs Portfolio review the appropriate legislation to see whether CBD products could be legally imported, sold and supplied in St Helena. This Bill would now amend the Drugs (Prevention of Misuse) Ordinance 2003 to revise the definition and to further regulate the provisions relating to the authorization of otherwise unlawful activities or on incidental or connected purposes. In particular, the definition of cannabis be amended so to remove the mature stalks of the plant and fibres produced from such mature stalks from the definition. Sections 5, 7 and 8 of the principle of the Ordinance are proposed to be amended to make provision for an exemption from the restrictions on the importation, supply and possession of personal care and food and drink products containing the controlled drug DHC in levels no more than 0.2%. The Bill will then assist to allow certain CBD products to be legally imported, sold and supplied in St Helena. As such, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. I put the question that the Drugs (Prevention of Misuse) (Amendment) Bill, 2020 be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the whole Council. Honourable Members, the question is now open for debate. Just on a point of information, that debate is to be confined to the principle of the Bill only and not the detail. Any Honourable Member wishes to speak? Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this Motion. Mr. Speaker, this Bill brings about a change that will permit the use of certain products that are made from environmentally sustainable materials, whilst at the same time not compromising the overall intent of the Ordinance. As such, Mr. Speaker, I fully support this Motion.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Anyone else wishes to speak? No? Honourable Mover, you may respond to the debate. No? Anyone? If you want to speak, Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Go ahead.

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Mr Speaker, I'd just like to rise in support of this Motion. This Motion will bring us in line with the United Kingdom, which is extremely important from a importation of drugs point of view. At the moment, it is possible to walk into many high street retailers in the UK, purchase items from them perfectly within the law and then bring it back to St Helena and find yourself on the wrong side of the law and therefore I think that this Motion is extremely important to move forward.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Mr Speaker, I also rise in support of this Motion. Mr. Speaker. Since becoming elected, just over a year ago now, it was brought to our attention by members of the community, who had concerns about importing CBD products and like my Honourable Friend just said, being on the wrong side of the law. Now, I know Mr. Speaker, that for those people who use the CBD for medicinal purposes, this change couldn't have come soon enough, but this is testimony to this Government that we have managed to push through an Ordinance that will help so many people and relieve so many importers of breaking the law in such a short time. And to that extent, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all elected Members who have taken part in getting this through the door.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Mover, you may speak to the Motion.

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a quick note to thank all the Honourable Members for their support to the Motion, which will now, as Honourable Karl Thrower has said, allow St Helena to closely align itself with the UK and most EU countries in regards of the use of Cannabis derived products for personal care, food and drinks with an added layer, I may add, of controlled protection within our community as that in the Bill regarding an age restriction. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Mover. I put the question that the Drugs (Prevention of Misuse) (Amendment) Bill, 2022 be approved in principle and referred to a Committee of the whole Council.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. You may continue.

The Hon. Martin Henry -

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

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Is there a seconder, please?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –
Mr. Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Chief Minister. So, I put the question that the Council do resolve itself into a Committee to consider the detailed provisions of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Council in Committee

The Chairman -
We are now in Committee of the whole Council and I put the question that the Title, Enacting Clause and Clause 1 do stand part of the Bill. Any Member wishes to speak?

The Hon. Martin Henry -
Mr Speaker, may I invite Aldhelm Garner to the table, please?

The Chairman –
Yes, you may. Thank you, Mr Aldhelm Garner for coming to the table.

Title, Enacting Clause and Clause 1.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –
I put the question that Clause 2 do stand part of the Bill. Any Member wishes to speak? Attorney General, nobody, no-one wishes to speak at all? Do you wish to?

The Hon. David Ballantyne (Attorney General) –
Perhaps, briefly, if I may.

The Chairman –
You can sit.

The Hon. David Ballantyne –
Ah, thank you, a relief. Clause 2 is really just repealing the existing definition and substituting a new definition which effectively extends from the definition of a controlled substance, the substances that are intended to be exempted so that that pattern will then be reflected in the rest of the Bill. Thank you.

The Chairman –
Thank you very much.

Clause 2.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

I put the question that Clause 3 do stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

I put the question that Clause 4 do stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Any Member wish to speak about anything at all, please do come ahead.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Mr Chair, I think it would help for the listening public if at least the titles of the various sections were announced and some brief explanation were given.

The Chairman –

Attorney General?

The Hon. David Ballantyne –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Picking up on the point, the main restriction is that in the existing law, the importation or exportation of a controlled drug is prohibited and section 5 of the Ordinance is being amended by Clause 3 of this Bill so as to exclude from that prohibition the exempted products as defined in the Clause that's already been approved. That takes us, I think, to Clause 4 which is an amendment of Section 7 of the original law and Section 7 in the original law is a restriction on production and supply of controlled drugs, so this amendment takes the supply of an exempted product out of that restriction so it de-restricts the exempted products from the prohibition in the original law and this, as I said earlier, is a pattern that will be evident as we go further.

The Chairman –

Thank you. So I put the question that Clause do stand part, 5, do stand part of the Bill. Those in contrary opinion say Aye...

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Chairman, I think we're on Clause 4 now.

The Chairman –

Yeah, I think, yeah, of course, yeah. I put the question that Clause 4 do stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman –

Anyone wish to speak on this? No? So, I put the question that Clause 5 do stand part of the Bill. Sorry, people seem to be wanting me to go, I just asked whether he had anything to say, he said no. Attorney General?

The Hon. David Ballantyne –

Well, if we're on Clause 5 of the Bill, I haven't spoken to that as yet, but I can take this very briefly that this amends Clause 5 of the Bill, and then Section 8 of the original law. Section 8

of the original law is a restriction of possession of controlled drugs, so this amendment takes the possession of an exempted product by anyone out of that restriction so that.....it was previously the case that it's unlawful for a person to have a controlled drug in the person's possession and now it will continue to say unless the person has in the person's possession an exempt product acquired from a person specified in Section 7(1)(b) and 7(1)(b) refers back to the supply to another person of an exempted product. Thank you.

The Chairman -

Thank you very much, Attorney General.

Clause 5.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman -

AG wish to assist with the next one?

The Hon. David Ballantyne (Attorney General) -

Thank you, Mr Speaker. This is the insertion of a new section, Section 8 (a), Exemption from Restrictions on importation, supply or possession and Section 8 (b), Prohibition in respect of supply and I think it would be, in fact, helpful just to read it out, if I may. It says, Requirement in respect of importation, sale or offer for sale. 8 (a) (i) an exempt product being imported, sold or offered for sale must be in the original packaging and must be clearly labelled with the contents in English. (ii) A person who imports, sells or offers for sale an exempt product contrary to subsection (i), that I just read out, commits an offence and a penalty of £500. Moving on to 8 (b), which is a prohibition in respect of sale, 8 (b) (i) a person must not sell or offer for sale any exempt product consisting of a food or drink product to a person who is under the age of 18 years. So the prohibition on selling or offering for sale of an exempt product consisting of a food or drink product to a person under 18 and the person who sells or offers for sale an exempt product consisting of a food or drink product to a person who is under the age of 18 commits an offence and there's a fine, a penalty of £500.

The Chairman -

Thank you, Attorney General. Anyone else wish to speak? No?

Clause 6.

Question put and agreed to.

Council Resumed

The Speaker -

Thank you all very much. We've moved back into House. Mover, you may speak at this point.

The Hon. Martin Henry -

Mr Speaker, I beg to report that the Drugs (Prevention of Misuse) (Amendment) Bill, 2022 passed the Committee with no amendments and to move that this Council approves the said Bill and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there a seconder? Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas –
Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –
Thank you very much. Honourable Mover, do you wish to speak once again to the Motion?

The Hon. Martin Henry –
Thank you Mr. Speaker, I have nothing further to add.

The Speaker –
Thank you very much. So I put the question that the Council approves the Drugs (Prevention of Misuse) (Amendment) Bill, 2022 and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted. Does any Member wish to speak? No? Thank you very much. Honourable Mover, do you wish to respond at this point?

The Hon. Martin Henry –
Just to thank all Members of the House for approving the Bill. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –
Thank you very much. Thank you.

Question that the Council approves the Drugs (Prevention of Misuse) (Amendment) Bill, 2022 and recommends to the Governor that it should be enacted, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –
Next item of business, please.

Motion No. 2 – The Honourable Chief Minister.

THE MINISTERIAL CODE OF CONDUCT

The Speaker –
Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this House resolves that the Ministerial Code of Conduct, in the form of Sessional Paper 47/2022, pursuant to Section 71 (a) of the Constitution of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, is approved.

The Speaker –
Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there a seconder? Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Julie Thomas –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, today I'm honoured to be presenting the first Ministerial Code of Conduct for St Helena. The Code provides guidance to Ministers in terms of the functioning of government and the impartiality of the public service, accountability to Legislative Council, use of government resources, propriety and ethics and separation between private and public interests. This Code is fundamental in enabling Ministers to undertake their roles in a professional, confident and respectful manner. The Code provides guidance on how Ministers should act and arrange their affairs in order to uphold the appropriate standard. It lists the principles that may apply in particular situations, as should be read against the background of the overarching duty on a Minister to comply with all relevant laws and to protect the integrity of public life. In addition, Ministers are expected to observe the Seven Principles of public life, which in Greek requires us to be selfless, to have integrity, be objective, accountable, open and honest and demonstrate good leadership. It is pertinent, however, to reinforce the importance of collective responsibility. The principle of collective responsibility requires a Minister to act in accordance with decisions taken collectively with the other Ministers and also requires the Minister to be able to express a view frankly, in a private session, so as to maintain unity in respect of the decisions reached. Pursuant to this principle, the privacy and confidentiality of the business of Executive Council and any other ministerial forum, and any correspondence in relation thereto must be maintained, hence, although important to be open and as transparent as possible, this cannot be undertaken in such a way that is contrary with the principle of collective responsibility, public interests or obligations that are legally or constitutionally constrained. The Code sets out the course of action that is to be taken against a Minister in respect of a breach. It clearly stipulates that Ministers are personally responsible for deciding how to act and conduct themselves in accordance with the Code. Ministers must be able to justify their actions and conduct to the Legislative Council and to the public. The Ministerial Code makes a clear distinction between the role as a Minister and that of the Public Service. A Minister has a duty to ensure that influence over the public service and public appointments is not abused for partisan purposes. The integrity of the recruitment process for public servants is the responsibility of the Chief Secretary acting on behalf of the Governor. The Chief Minister is responsible for the allocation of functions between Ministers in charge of Portfolios. The Minister in charge of a Portfolio is accountable to Legislative Council for the exercise of powers on which the administration of that Portfolio depends. A Minister must uphold the political impartiality of the public service and not ask public servants to act in any way that would conflict with the Public Service Code of Conduct. A Minister has a duty to give fair consideration and due weight to inform an impartial advice received from public servants, as well as to other considerations and advice received in reaching public decision. To be clear, however, Portfolio Directors hold the delegation as the Responsible Officer for the proper financial management of their Directorate and the Financial Secretary is the ultimate Accounting Officer for the overall management and control of government finances. The Code also sets out how Ministers should conduct themselves in respect of conflicts of interest and how to present policy effectively and how to communicate this in a manner that is conducive to best practice. In essence, the Ministerial Code is our Operations Manual and if used correctly, will guide us, protect us and ensure that we operate in such a way that does not negatively impact us, both legally and professionally. Having finally reached this milestone, Mr. Speaker, where the Ministerial Code can be published is indeed an achievement. Hence, it would be remiss of me not to recognise key persons that have contributed. I would like to thank my Ministerial Team, the AG's Chambers, the Governor in his capacity as Chair of Executive Council and all elected members for your

input, which has made it possible for this document to be presented here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much, Chief Minister. Honourable Members, the Motion is that this House resolves that the Ministerial Code of Conduct, in the form of Sessional Paper 47/2022, pursuant to Section 71 (a) of the Constitution of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, is approved. The Motion is now open for debate. Anyone wish to speak? Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this Motion. Mr. Speaker, the Ministerial Code of Conduct is a critical piece of the overall puzzle when it comes to ensuring that the ministerial reform of government is able to operate effectively whilst ensuring probity. As such, Mr. Speaker, I fully support this Motion.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Anyone else wish to speak? No? Does the Mover wish to respond to the debate? Attorney General?

The Hon. David Ballantyne (Attorney General) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would only rise to point out that this fulfils an obligation under the Constitution, Section 71 (a) to which you refer (*inaudible*) Constitution and to any other law and to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Council, a Ministerial Code approved by the Legislative Council shall detail the behaviour expected of the Chief Minister and other Ministers and the sanctions for failure to comply with those mandates. This therefore fulfils the Constitutional requirement and accordingly it's entirely in the spirit of the Constitution. Thank you.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just, basically, to thank everybody for their support. As they said, it is a milestone and we are quite proud of that moment now because it is something that has been outstanding. Now that it's been approved, I'd like to encourage the public to read and digest this document when it is published and put into the public domain, because I think it would help to aid understanding. The desire is also to now undertake a communication boost to emphasize and provide clarity of the roles and functions of the Ministers and the changes since implementing a new form of government, and that is the ministerial government. So, thanks to everybody for all the hard work and for the support. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Members, the Motion is that this House resolves that the Ministerial Code of Conduct, in the form of Sessional Paper 47/22, pursuant to Section 71 (a) of the Constitution of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, is approved. I now call for a vote.

Question that the Ministerial Code of Conduct is approved, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

Next item of business, please.

Motion No. 3 – The Honourable Robert Midwinter.

**ST HELENA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
STANDING ORDERS**

The Speaker –

The Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House resolves that the Standing Orders, in the form of Sessional Paper 48/22, pursuant to Section 68 of the Constitution of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, are approved.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there a seconder?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

I beg to second.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this revision to the Standing Orders for the Legislative Council has been extensively worked on by both the previous Council and also the current Council. The Standing Orders have also been reviewed by the Attorney General's Chambers and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Mr. Speaker, the revisions made in this latest update, bring our Standing Orders in line with the ministerial form of government in areas such as the working of the Select Committees, and also the introduction of a ministerial Question Time whilst adopting a more modern approach to working such as through the facilitation of virtual attendance of meetings of this Council. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Members, the Motion is that this House resolves that the Standing Orders, in the form of Sessional Paper 48/22, pursuant to Section 68 of the Constitution of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, are approved. The Motion is now open for debate. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex -

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have this Motion before us in the House today with an enormous feeling of relief, because we've been waiting for this for ages and it essentially sets out the rules of engagement as a Legislative Council in its entirety and therefore I'm really overjoyed that we have now got the version which is ready for hopefully launching this afternoon. I think we must recognize that it may not be perfect or once it has been in implementation for some time, we may find that there are things that need tweaking, adjusting, possibly new elements that need to be brought in as our democratic process evolves and develops, but this is a tremendous hurdle that we have successfully overcome, so I would like to thank all who have been involved

in the process and, particularly, the legal drafting team within the Attorney General's Chambers who have made an invaluable contribution. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Any other Honourable Member wish to speak at this point? No one else? Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Well, I don't think I can sum it up any more than what the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex just did, if I'm perfectly honest, but I think just for the listening public more than probably for ourselves, many people have been asking about Question Time and all the other elements that we've been waiting on and now if this is endorsed this afternoon, this will allow us, as Dr. Essex has just said, to provide and continue with these functions now, so we should be near to start to see the whole realm of what it means to be a ministerial government, so, I too stand in full support. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much, Honourable Chief Minister. Anyone else? No-one else. Mover, you may respond if you wish?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, the Honourable Dr. Essex has also taken my response, so I just merely wish to rise to thank my colleagues for their support, and, again to acknowledge the extensive work that has been put in by so many, over a number of years actually, in order to bring these Standing Orders to this House. No doubt there will need to be further work done in the future, this is a new set of Standing Orders that is for this new form of government and is likely to need further tweaking along the way, but it is a significant milestone, like with the Ministerial Code, which is another significant milestone and another piece of that puzzle, so, Mr Speaker, again, just to thank everyone and particularly the legal draft team involved, again, thank you to everyone that's been involved.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much.

Question that the Standing Orders, in the form of Sessional Paper 48/22, pursuant to Section 68 of the Constitution of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, are approved, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

We move on to the next item of business, please.

Motion No. 4 – The Honourable Gillian Brooks.

ST HELENA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT

The Speaker –

The Honourable Gillian Brooks

The Hon. Gillian Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this House resolves that the Code of Conduct for Members of Legislative Council, in the form of Sessional Paper 49/22, pursuant to Section 71 (b) of the Constitution of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, is approved.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Is there a seconder? Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Mover, do you wish to speak to the Motion now?

The Hon. Gillian Brooks –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the current Code of Conduct has been in place since 2018. With the advent of the ministerial government in 2021, Honourable Members found the 2018 Code no longer fit for purpose and that a complete review should be undertaken. A Working Group, assisted by Legislative draftsman, Catherine Williams, worked through the Code making comparisons with Codes from other jurisdictions and developed a Code appropriate for St Helena. Honourable Members considered the draft and were of the opinion that the CPA should scrutinise the report. The CPA delegated this responsibility to the Clerks in the Isle of Man and Jo Corkish presented recommendations for St Helena Legislative Council to consider. This produced a further draft report for evaluation and here we are today, Mr. Speaker, with a Code of Conduct in readiness to be presented for approval at this formal meeting of Legislative Council. Thanks are extended to all who participated in putting together the new Code of Conduct and I here again acknowledge the support of the Legislative Drafter, Catherine Williams, for her invaluable input. I now present this Code to Honourable Members for debate. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Members, the Motion is that this House resolves that the Code of Conduct for Members of Legislative Council, in the form of Sessional Paper 49/22, pursuant to Section 71 (b) of the Constitution of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, is approved. The Motion is now open for debate. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this Motion. Mr. Speaker, the Code of Conduct for Members of Legislative Council is yet another critical piece of the overall puzzle when it comes to ensuring that we as a Council are able to operate effectively whilst ensuring privacy. And as such, Mr. Speaker, I again fully support this Motion.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Any other Members wish to speak? Nobody? Does the Mover wish to respond?

The Hon. Gillian Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to say once again, thank you to the Honourable Members for their support.

The Speaker –

Honourable Members, the Motion is that this House resolves that the Code of Conduct for Members of Legislative Council, in the form of Sessional Paper 49/22, pursuant to section 71 (b) of the Constitution of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, is approved. I now call for the vote.

Question on Motion, put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

Next item of business, please?

Motion No. 5 – 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 House requests that a comprehensive review of the 2009 Constitution Order be undertaken.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Dr Essex. Is there a seconder to the Motion, please? The Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the current St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha Constitution Order of 2009 has been in existence for nearly fourteen years. It represents the culmination of review processes spanning eleven years and subsequent amendments to make the necessary changes to reflect the introduction of ministerial government. Because of the short time period between the expression of public will regarding what governance model should be in place and the 2021 general election, it was made clear that only the essential amendments required to move to a ministerial model should be taken forward at that point in time. This came as a disappointment as concerns regarding other aspects of the Constitution Order exist and a Motion calling for constitutional review was passed in this Honourable House in 2015. That Motion also stood in my name. Since that time, air access has become a reality and considerable change has taken place both within St Helena and, indeed, globally, which makes it all the more important that the constitutional provisions are up to date, relevant and appropriate. Having a Territory's Constitution reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains fit for purpose, aligns with the British Government's desire and commitment to maintain a dynamic and evolving relationship with its overseas territories. As I stated in this House seven years ago, and I quote, "due to the importance and complexity of drawing up a Constitution, the requirements for three very different islands need full public support and has to be accepted by Her Majesty's Government. The process of constitutional review is a lengthy one that cannot be finished in the blink of an eye and that is why the process needs to start sooner rather than later". The purpose of this Motion today is not to pre-empt the outcome of a review process, nor to suggest any specific model. The decision as to whether a segmented or holistic

approach would be taken will be required and the recommendations emanating from the review must be supported by a public mandate. Instead, the purpose today is to flag the necessity of starting a constitutional review process to ensure that hopefully within the next few years, St Helena can benefit from a robust constitution that is relevant, appropriate and reflects changing circumstances in economic and social development. Mr Speaker, I trust that my colleagues will support this enabling Motion, as a first step, to kick-start the process that will enable the development of a constitution that will match the needs of the Island in the next decade. If the Motion is carried, I suggest that a Select Committee be established to take the review process forward. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker -

Thank you very much. Honourable Members, the Motion is that this House requests that a comprehensive review of the 2009 Constitution Order be undertaken. The Motion is now open for debate. Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, apart from Honourable members in this House today, who may see fit to support the Honourable Mover of this Motion, Councillor Dr Corinda Essex, in her quest to have a comprehensive review of the 2009 Constitution, I know that there are many members of the public that wanted the current Constitution to have been reviewed for a considerable period of time. Last year over a decade of the constitutional amendments in 2009, the public, and quite rightly, in my view, felt the time had come finally for a complete review to be undertaken, but it wasn't to be. All that happened was sufficient amendments were given to the Constitution to enable the ministerial government to be established. Why, it was asked, couldn't some extra time be taken to allow for a complete review? I am sure that there are chunks of outdated phrases in the present Constitution. There are areas that work against proper accountability. A comprehensive review of the 2009 Constitution Order is required, carried out over a reasonable period of time, and people still in constitutional reform should be invited to be part of the comprehensive review. Mr. Speaker, I give this Motion my full support. Thank you.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Member, I think I saw Honourable Ronald Coleman first of all.

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise in support of this Motion and as it's been well over 10 years and although some amendments have been made, now that we have a new ministerial system of government there are some areas still requiring some input and addressing moving forward, therefore, I fully support the Motion.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise in support of this Motion. Mr. Speaker, the last full review of the Constitution took place over a decade ago, and the proposed changes came into force on the 1st September 2009. So much has changed since then, both at a local and a global level. However, our Constitution has not kept pace with this changing landscape. Whilst I note that, following work undertaken by the government's commission in 2020, further

amendments were made which came into force in July 2021, those revisions made only really focused on the transition to administer a reform of government. The recent review of the Standing Orders and other related items has since flagged up other areas which could be improved upon within the Constitution, particularly if we are to fully implement the changes to our governance structure that are proposed within the CPA benchmarking report in order to ensure separation of powers. As such, Mr. Speaker, I fully support this Motion.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member? Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower -

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I also rise in support of the Motion. As my Honourable Colleague just mentioned, there was a review in the 2020s period, however, there were several key issues highlighted even then, that weren't taken forward because they weren't anything to do with the implementation of ministerial government. So there are not only issues that are all from when it was originally revised in 2009, but there were also other things that should have been done in 2020 which weren't done, so we really need to move forward with this, we have a very outdated Constitution, I just don't think it's fit for purpose anymore. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker -

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

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I also rise in support of this Motion and just to add that during the time I served on the Governor's Commission, many of the elements which I learned for the first time was highlighted beyond the scope of what we achieved with the Governor's Commission and therefore I would like that work to continue and fully support this Motion. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wish to speak, if not I'll ask the Honourable Mover if she wishes to respond?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'd like to thank my colleagues for their strong support, naturally, (*Inaudible*) process commence and I would continue to look for their support if this is passed in the House and we do, indeed, embark on what I hope won't be too long a journey before we get a revised Constitution. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Mover. Honourable Members, the Motion is that this House requests that a comprehensive review of the 2009 Constitution Order be undertaken.

Question on Motion, put and agreed to. The Motion is carried.

The Speaker –

Next item of business, please?

7.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Speaker –

The Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I beg to move that this House do adjourn sine die.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Is there a seconder to the Motion, please?

The Hon. Mark Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, I beg to second.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. The Motion is that this House do now adjourn sine die. The Motion is now open for debate. Who's first? The Honourable Chief Minister or the Honourable Robert Midwinter?

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the adjournment. Firstly, Mr. Speaker, having recently returned from the UK. I would like to place on record my thanks to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and their related partners, in particular, the FCDO, the National Audit Office, and the government Internal Audit Agency for a very informative public finances and good governance forum. I know that I managed to get a lot out of attending this forum in person, as I'm sure that other delegates from St Helena did and it was particularly useful engaging with peers from the other UK overseas territories, and sharing experiences.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to thank those constituents who took the time to come out and voice their concerns regarding the latest proposed changes to the Immigration Policy. Having attended several of the public meetings, it would appear that the public share many of the concerns that were voiced by elected members when these proposed changes were presented to us through an informal Legislative Council, and it is therefore disappointing to note that members views were not taken into account prior to these meetings. Mr Speaker, overall I am of the view that the public consultation was not conducted very well, and that further work needs to be done in respect of this critical piece of policy before any proposed changes to the legislation come before this House.

Mr. Speaker, in respect of legislation, I'm again raising my concerns that so many of the issues that are raised with me by members of the public will be addressed with legislation that was being worked on by the previous Council is brought to this house, and constituents continually ask me when this will happen. However, thus far, over a year after being elected to office, despite the questions having arisen at several meetings of this Council, and assurances having been given by the Chief Minister, we have not had sight of any list of legislation to be progressed, prioritized or otherwise. And I therefore look forward to seeing this as a matter of priority when we return after our recess in the New Year.

Mr. Speaker, I would again wish to note that a key concern to the public with the help of the community, and it is therefore pleasing to note that additional funding has been provided by the FCDO to support critical infrastructure for the hospital, including diagnostic equipment. I would add that whilst we came through reopening the Island pretty much unscathed, we must

ensure that we remain vigilant and prepare for ongoing waves of the COVID virus which are likely to emerge from time to time. Mr. Speaker in this respect, particularly as we head into the festive season, I would like to draw attention to those members of our community that we so often fail to fully recognize, in particular, our emergency services and our care workers. Mr. Speaker, with the unprecedented walkout of nursing staff in the United Kingdom yesterday, under threat of further industrial action within this and also a number of other critical sectors looming over the UK this Christmas. I think that it is important for us to note that it is not enough to simply applaud; we must also be prepared to adequately reward those frontline workers upon whose dedication and devotion to service we depend. In this respect, I hope that careful consideration is being given to how we reward our own care workers financially, particularly as we enter into discussions with the FCDO over next year's budget settlement.

Mr. Speaker, today we have seen the adoption by this House of three critical documents that will between them enable closer scrutiny of ourselves as elected members, and also the activities of the St Helena Government more generally. I look forward to working with my peers early in the New Year to ensure that the required actions are taken to facilitate those additional areas of public scrutiny that are reproduced through the revised Standing Orders, in particular, investigations by the Select Committees and the new ministerial Question Time. Mr. Speaker, before closing, I again wish to remember those who are in conflict zones this Christmas, in particular the Ukrainian people, I hope and pray that the New Year will see a peaceful resolution of this conflict if not sooner. And finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year. I look forward to attending numerous public events over the period of recess, in order to engage with constituents in an informal manner and I shall remain available to my constituents should they need to contact me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Member wishes to speak to the Adjournment Debate? Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman -

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, we are slowly moving towards Christmas and although this should be a joyous time for everyone, on this occasion, there will be those among us who is feeling the pinch this time of year. We were elected in October 2021 and soon it will be 2023. Apart from openness and transparency, and better communication, we also spoke about better quality of life for all, leaving no one behind and being inclusive. We also said that decisions made will be for the benefit of this Island and its people. From my time as the people's representative, one of my concerns is poverty, which is on the increase, especially relative poverty. Many people are suffering and going through a lot of stress and anxiety from a number of problems. For some of them, they feel that they have been abandoned, with no one caring and I am constantly reassuring them as our people. As a Councillor, I am concerned that solutions to these problems are taking a long time to alleviate any hardships faced by many of our people, especially the elderly, our pensioners and those on low incomes and those who don't qualify for Basic Island Pension or Income Related Benefits because the Social Security still seems to be unfair for some people, especially those who are forced to live on their hard earned savings, many who have made sacrifices to go off island to make a better life for their family and are now being penalised. How do we expect our people to cope with the rise in the high cost of living, including the fuel costs? People are looking towards Government to help them face these hardships. When the utility costs is going to be increased, we approved £33.00 to the low income households and even though the tariffs remain the same, that money which was proposed and approved, in my opinion, should still go to those low income households to

help the situation of the high cost of living. To help, Mr Speaker, the low income working class and the low paid pensioners, consideration needs to be given quickly on raising the income threshold, even if it's just by a thousand pounds a year, it would put additional money into the people's pockets during this time of hardship. Mr Speaker, one example, with a person on Income Related Benefits paid to a disabled person who has been disabled all their life and will not get a pension. He was given the opportunity to go on holiday with his family for four weeks and the Government took away his benefits for those four weeks. How is this caring? How do we have policies that still allow this to happen? This is the sort of situation we need to fix. It breaks my heart that this sort of thing is allowed to happen. Where is the inclusiveness and leaving no-one behind comes in. This person will never be able to have a pension.

Mr Speaker, housing is still another problem of this Island, which I've raised many times before. What is the housing department doing to alleviate this problem. There are empty houses and there are some empty for a long time and some still empty, even though they know that people are desperate to have a roof over their house, especially single mothers.

This is very frustrating. Some are told they don't qualify and are forced into rented accommodation, which costs between £350 to £500 a month on the local market, which is over 50% of their income and some 60% when the international standard is no more than 30% of their income to be spent on housing. How do we expect people who survive and how will they qualify? And, for some, when the house do become available they are placed outside of the area which they are familiar with, which causes more stress and anxiety. A couple of months ago, we put pressure on releasing Bunkers Hill for development, but with the conditions put on this development, Saints overseas are people who go overseas to get the money to build their own house with not purposely from first time buyers, unbelievable, but I believe, Mr Speaker, that the Minister responsible is working to improve the situation and I would advise him to put his skates on with a view of releasing all of the land legislated for development so that more people can participate in this area.

Another area, Mr Speaker, is pensions. A better pension or pension system for the people of St Helena is needed as the MiSaint system will eventually place everybody back on the Government Social Security System when the monies put in run out and it's not good for our Consolidated Fund to be withdrawn.

Then we have the Insurance Services which a lot of people have difficulty with. Let's hope that when we have the cable up and running this will give people other choices.

Mr Speaker, Child Minding and Creches. Those caring for children today in our society is to allow mothers to enter the world of work knowing their children are safe. Recently, there's been some policies introduced and one of our Child Minders, after twenty-four years of service, has withdrawn her service which she felt she had been watched by the Child Services, to put it mildly, but there are other businesses also not having this situation, but we are looking into this and that is the for today.

Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity now to thank the people of St Helena for their support to me as a Councillor. And, finally, Mr Speaker, I want to wish everyone and their families good wishes for the festive season and hope the New Year brings better times for the people of St Helena, including our visitors, a Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year and to those of you who are not having the time you would like to, let's hope that your Christmas with your family can be as nice as it can be under your circumstances. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I declare my interest as President of the St Helena Chamber of Commerce.

The Speaker –
Thank you.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Mr Speaker, in my last contribution to an Adjournment Debate in this Honourable House, I raised two key issues that would encourage Saints to remain on St Helena or to return from employment overseas. These were:

- improving educational opportunities and
- reducing the time period required by expatriate spouses or life partners of Saints in order to obtain full rights.

I trust that the latter will be addressed in the revised Immigration Policy.

Today I will touch on another key area which drives young Saints to leave their Island and seriously deters others from returning. This is the market value of land on which to build a family home, which is far beyond the pockets of most young persons and families, even, in some cases, with the assistance of a bank loan. In 2016, the Land and Building Disposal Policy made possible the first step towards discounted prices for the first time home owners, but this was a new concept and it raised concern that it would be abused and St Helena Government would lose important revenue as a result of selling valuable assets below market value. Those drawing up the policy were aware that did not go as far as they would have liked, but it was at least a move in the right direction. In 2020, a review of this policy commenced which built upon the principles established, but made further recommendations that would make land more affordable to residents and first time buyers. The revised policy was almost complete before the General Election, but has still not been finalised, I am aware that the Honourable Minister Brooks is working hard with his Portfolio to get something in place, but I wish to emphasize the importance of this new policy becoming fully operational as a matter of urgency. In particular, the criteria for being eligible to obtain discounted prices for land for first homes need changing so that Saints who are working offshore to earn enough to enter the property markets are not penalized because they are not physically present on St Helena. If affordable land is more readily available, it will not only prevent so many young Saints from having to leave to generate the income to get their own homes, but will also lessen the time to have to be away in order to achieve this. In addition, it will stimulate the local economy through increased house construction and associated benefits for the wider private sector, which is of particular importance in the current global economic situation. House construction does not only assist contractors in the housing market, it assists all in the supply chain, it increases the volume of the freight which then hopefully translates into maintaining or even reducing freight costs, the multiplier effect is considerable.

Mr Speaker, if it is not going to be possible to get the entire new policy in place in quick time, I urge Ministers to consider a segmented approach, at least revising the eligibility criteria immediately so that Saints overseas, that is beyond Ascension, because Ascension is already covered, can tap into the opportunities available in the Comprehensive Development Areas which they are currently almost excluded from accessing. If there are concerns about fronting and other undesirable possibilities of the process, these can be addressed through the details of the sales agreements and other mechanisms. As I have stated many times, St Helena's most valuable asset is its people, so we must ensure that our policies are in their best interests and that opportunities to retain and/or regain their expertise are not lost.

Mr Speaker, I support the Adjournment and take this opportunity to extend Seasons Greetings to my colleagues and constituents and to thank them for their support and encouragement. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Gillian Brooks

The Hon. Gillian Brooks -

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Adjournment. Albeit it seems to have come too quickly, but we are once again at the end of another year, and, as such, we tend to naturally reflect back over the months to what we have done or what we still need to do. Today, after much revision, we laid on the table the Code of Conduct for elected members, Standing Orders and Ministerial Code of Conduct, all so vital in conducting our work going forward. The working year has presented expected challenges and there will not be easy fixes to a lot of the problems that we face on Island, but I believe that we need to give reassurance that we carry these concerns forward with us into the coming year. We don't forget that people are financially struggling, costs continue to rise, there is uncertainty around crucial elements in the Island's future and we need to continue our undertakings to seek a better future for all. The wheels of progress can be slow moving, but what I stood for in the first place will be as important to me going forward as it was when I started.

Mr. Speaker as we go into the festive holiday, I would like to make mention and say thank you to those persons in our frontline services and other departments, who, through the nature of their job roles will continue to work over the holiday period to maintain necessary services. I would like to thank you, Mr Speaker, Madam Deputy Speaker and Honourable Colleagues, for your support to me over the past few weeks while I've been away for personal reasons and especially to the Honourable Dr Essex who covered as the District rep for me in Jamestown. And, finally, to take this opportunity to wish everyone a safe and Happy Christmas and all good wishes for the New Year. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Member. Anyone else wishes to? Honourable Martin Henry.

The Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise in support of the Adjournment and just to have a very quick one, which is to wish everybody a Happy Christmas and end of year break. And just to echo the comments of my fellow members here, which is to spare a thought for all of our frontline staff in Health and Social Care, Police, Prison and all staff that will be working over this holiday period to keep us protected and safe. And finally, to members of this Council for your support, continued critical questioning and input from members of the public to help me make informed decisions to improving and directing our Island's future. Thank you all. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Rosemary Bargo?

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Adjournment. Mr Speaker, today, I simply would like to wish everyone a safe and happy Christmas season and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year. However, I do echo my fellow colleagues concerns on our people's

struggles on making ends meet in the current high cost of living situation and that we, as a Council, need to find solutions to help our people going forward.

Mr Speaker, on another note, we all have had a very tiring year with some huge milestones made for the betterment of the Island and I'm pleased to say some of those milestones were made today, so well done. And I commend our Ministers, all Members of this Legislative Council and special thanks to our legislative admin staff, St Helena Government and the public for their support in enabling such decisions. I would also like to acknowledge all the hard work of various organizations and everyone thus far in making this time of the year such a joyful occasion for all and special mention to the schools for their hard work and dedication in reminding us all what Christmas is all about. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker -

Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Mark Brooks?

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise in support of the Adjournment Debate. Mr Speaker, I haven't prepared anything today and I'll try and make my adjourning debate quite short and my questions is usually quite as well, the answers to my questions.

The Speaker -

Okay.

The Hon. Mark Brooks -

So, Mr Speaker, yes, we do find ourselves at this time of year again, and what a year has it been. I think when I just look back and try and reflect on some of the highlights and some of the constraints, well, the lowlights, yes, of the year and some of them was the start of the war in Ukraine which continues today. The death of Queen Elizabeth I think, who basically pulled at all our heartstrings because of the amount of time that she has been Queen, which is entirely my lifetime, I've never known anything else and that's why it feels a bit more personal I would say, but yeah, just to look at what we have achieved as a government. We have transitioned our Island from one that was basically in lockdown to one now that is living with COVID and I can see in the community, the community is a lot more relaxed about this position now. But, as my Honourable Friend says, there might be instances in the future, which we need to keep our eye on the ball on with the help of Minister Henry and his professional team at the Hospital, I know we'll be in good hands.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk a little bit about our Ministerial Code, because this Code basically started its life as an off the shelf document from the UK Ministerial Code and for a hundred different reasons, did not work for St Helena so we had to basically pull it apart and then put it back together again, Saint style and I think, with the help of the Governor, sorry, with the help of this Governor, because this started its life with the previous Governor, and has also been through two Attorney Generals, and this is the third Attorney General that has helped us with our Code, so I do appreciate all the help that has been put into this, and, as I say, it was a bit of a lengthy task, but we got there in the end and that's the same to go with the Code of Conduct and also the Standing Orders.

So, Mr Speaker, I would just finish by wishing everyone a Happy New Year, sorry, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, I told you I never prepared anything, Mr Speaker, it might be a slow car crash, but we'll continue, and I think I'd just like to pick up on what my Honourable Friend, Dr Essex said about the housing needs on the Island and the Land Disposal Policy and, yes, we are working on a new Property Disposal and Purchase Policy and I have been working very closely with all the Officers and the Elected Members in trying to widen

the criteria for first time buyers so it includes many Saints as possible, but obviously first time buyer Saints as possible and to try and attract some of the Saints living on the Falklands and the UK back to the Island, but this Policy does talk to other policies, so until we finish our Immigration Policy and also there's a Stamp Duty policy that is waiting in the wings, but we need to give some reassurance that these policies align and talk to each other and so, as Dr Essex did mention she hope to have this done soon, I can give an update to say that we're hoping to have this done early in the New Year, so that's what I can give to my Honourable Friends here as well as the listeners, so just to thank everyone for all the support they have given us throughout the year. Thank you very much.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Mark Brooks and thank you for being so brief, if that is your brief. Thank you very much. Anyone else wish to speak? Honourable Karl Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of the Adjournment. It's good that today we finally got the Ministerial Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and the Code of Conduct for the Members of Legislative Council finally passed. Hopefully, this will now pave forward for us to start, as elected members, start delivering the ministerial system that was promised to the people at the time of the referendum, which the people obviously voted on. It is a shame that it took so long, obviously it would have been nice if it was three months rather than what it is now, we're sixteen months, but then it has to be done correctly and these documents, some of them went, seemed to have been pillar to post and all around the houses, but I'm very happy that the final drafts that we've put forward today should deliver what was promised. I think there's a lot of people that have been waiting for that, you know, and this year has been tough anyway, as my Honourable Friend told us there, you know, we only came out of lockdown just over four months ago, you know, and it's almost like people have forgotten there is an implication, that we were locked down, it is a very strange thing. When you walk around the streets now, what was so important four or five months ago, is now almost just the footlights in an old newspaper. You know, and I'm sure there will be challenges going ahead, you know, Covid hasn't gone, we all know that, you know, from a medical point of view, I'm sure that the Health Service will be ready for anything that comes hopefully.

Now, obviously, what we were talking about the questioning. We've heard about the big changes that Health Services are making, services that will see people manage to remain longer on island. I know that we always look at medical overseas referrals as costs, but let's face it, it's not nice when we send somebody whose family member is ill off island where they can't talk to them and they can't communicate with them very well, you know, it's not nice for the person going off on the medevac, but it's really not nice also for the whole family to stay here, you know, and the more people we can see on Island, the less stress people will get from that. You know, but then, it does worry me that we also have to address it's great getting all these machines and that, but we can't put them into crumbling buildings, you know, and the state of the hospital, I know it comes out of a different budget, but we've got to get this sorted, you know, where anybody who's sat in the waiting room will have noticed all the cables hanging out of the roofs for the last three years, you know, the paint peeling off. If you've got a brand new piece of machinery worth hundreds of thousands of pounds and a piece of peeling paint breaks this and we have to get somebody out to fix this at huge cost, that is ridiculous, you know, so I would urge that when we're looking at the budget that we actually address these issues. Well, you cannot put, you know, we cannot do that, it's just crazy, but it's not fit for purpose in the hospital, they need minimum maintenance, it needs to be done, and no budget supply, but maybe, maybe we have stuck by, but I couldn't believe it the other day, when I

pulled up behind a Discovery Sports with SHG plates. What is going on with that? You know, a Discovery Sport is a luxury, large car. Why has SHG got one with SHG plates on? You know, there are more Landrovers going around this island with alloy wheels it seems almost every week, all with SHG number plates on. You know, we cannot tell nurses, firemen and police that we can't afford to pay them any more money and the reckless spending on vehicles with other infrastructure that is short term, that needs addressing.

The CDA at Bottom Woods is finally moving forward and that certainly is a good move, in fact, I remember when I was actually on the Planning Board when that went through, it was years ago, so that is great, but as my Honourable Friend, Dr Corinda Essex says, you cannot build these things unless people can afford to move into them. You know, we don't want this so that we've got an island full of holiday homes for richer people overseas and then all of our local St Helenians leave. We have to address it, I know Minister Brooks is working on it, but it would be ideal if we have something in place for when you are going to release those plots. Now, you've said that those plots will be released soon, so I would emphasize that that should be soon.

You know, the telecommunications is moving forward, you know, with somebody from a telecommunications background, I know it seems like a lot to do in a short timeframe. It can be done, you know, I've seen companies do it, I've seen companies deliver projects in a certain timeframe, all I've got to say to that is, to my Honourable Friend is where do I sign up to be a test coach. You know, if you want one in March, I'm perfectly happy to do that for you.

And finally look, we really, I've already mentioned the cost of housing, but we really have to start looking at how we can get both Government employees and just normal working people on the lower wages lifted up here. Obviously the budget is designed to do that and, once again, I referred to it previously, we know budgets are tight but we have really got, there are people who are really worried about where their next meal's coming from and when that some people have always got less money than others, but when you're talking about people where you've got two people in full-time employment, that is not acceptable. Okay, we're not talking about the poorest people; this is becoming a struggle for the normal people, you know, we've got to get to a stage where people get enough money to live and not just enough money to exist.

And finally, Mr Speaker, I would like to say I hope everybody has a Happy Festive Season and I hope that we can all hit the ground running when we come back on the 1st and start moving forward with everything. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Any other Honourable Members to speak? Honourable Attorney General?

The Hon. David Ballantyne (Attorney General) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Given where we are today in this Council, I think it might be appropriate to say something about the approach of the Attorney General's Chambers to future legislation. It's a topic that I think it could be described as surrounded by mist and this is therefore an opportunity for me to be able to say to people that for us to set out our selves within the AG's Chambers, this is a matter that was taken up even before I arrived here as to what, which was considered might be done about the perception of whilst not making a non-limited statute in the timely fashion. What I have to say is you will appreciate we are a small but committed band of people, but we will grow, that's the first thing, but, secondly, from a practical point of view, the recent focus has been on the three pieces of infrastructure that you've approved today and they're extremely important in order to enable you and us to deliver for you and for your constituents, if I may put it and, of course, to the Government who are leading on all of this. That focus has provided these structural arrangements that will allow

things to be channelled in a very suitable way, that's my impression; however, we are now beginning to develop a legislative programme. This is based on a model which has been utilised effectively elsewhere and it's an initiative of this Government. It puts out with some of my own personal feelings of introducing a legislative calendar elsewhere, but we have a first class legislative drafting capability here and from a, if I may say, a pedigree with which I'm familiar from other places and I mean that personal pedigree, people who have vast experience in this area, so I have to say, however, as you'll appreciate, it's a fine art resource and what we are now doing, for the benefit of you and the wider public, is really trying to insert the pieces of the legislation jigsaw into a matrix which will show the stages that they're at and what is needed further to get them into a position to be brought here and ultimately on to the Statute Book. This will entail circulation within Government initially, and some degree of prioritisation will have to be required, which is a matter not for us, but for the Government. However, we also plan to take steps to augment a drafting capability. There are various options which I don't propose to set out here until we have firmer information. To dispel these myths we need to identify what stage intended legislation is at and what we need to do to get to a point where it might be suitable to bring for enactment so I appreciate this is very much an introductory opportunity for myself, I am, as it were, throwing my cap across the stream and realise that there's been a great deal of frustration I think surrounding this issue. We will endeavour to fulfil our remit and we will look forward to a point where we can have proper clarity on what it is in front of us and an acceptable plan for the future. Thank you.

The Speaker

Thank you, Honourable Attorney General. I don't normally like to comment when people make comments, but I believe I am right in saying that this is the first time I've known when an Attorney General who actually takes part in the Adjournment Debate, a breath of fresh air I think for me. We have faced frustration, certainly on the part of things that I am involved in, we do suffer on St Helena from not having independent legal advice, but, you know, if the Attorney General's Chambers are going to build, as it seems like it's gonna do, legal, then maybe we won't be having the need to be asking for independent legal advice, but, thank you very much, Attorney General and I'll leave it there. Over to you, Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) -

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, if I'm very honest, I think we've all been waiting for this moment, where I stand up and say this and then we bang the hammer and it's away for the Christmas season. But I would like to say thank you to everybody for contributing to the Adjournment Debate. As I always do, I will try to address some of the concerns and issues raised and also the positivity raised from some of you as well. I will thank the Attorney General as well, because he's now explained the reason for the legislative program being somewhat delayed. I'll also turn to Minister Brooks and say thank you to you for reiterating the fact that the Land Disposal and Purchase Policy, there's so many always added into that and that's something that is being worked upon and is something that we'll be hoping to get out as soon as we can in the New Year. I appreciate, if I can generalize this now, that there is frustration, I also understand and acknowledge that there are a lot of people who are struggling because of cost of living; there is no way I'm going to deny the knowledge of that. However, I think we need to look at the wider community, and I'm not just talking St Helena, the entire world right now, and understand, like it was acknowledged today, the recent war in Ukraine, it's had knock-on effects. Yes, St Helena probably didn't feel it, if I'm honest with you, as early as some of the other parts of the world did, but we're certainly feeling it now. And it's incredibly hard and like Councillor Coleman said, it's not easy to face the community knowing at times that there's nothing that we can do for specific cases. However, I know that this Council is committed to

ensuring that we should make changes that can impact everybody in a positive light. The unfortunate thing is some of these changes don't happen overnight. So, telecoms is one of them that we've seen coming through this year, the very next one will be shipping, because that's a matter of urgency, and as has been said here today, we'd hope to make another commitment and announcement to the community of St. Helena before the end of this month. So that will give you a hint that although we're going into recess there's going to be work being done because we understand the urgency behind the need to have something committed and confirmed with our shipping agent.

The very next one that these Ministers and all of us are very keen to address is renewable energy, because I think many have talked about cost of housing, the cost of living and for us, renewable energy is the best way now to look at that area, if we can have affordable Telecomms, the next one would be our water, electricity, because it doesn't just improve for businesses, it is for the households as well. Our land is very, is our resource, but it is in short supply and we also understand how important it is that we make it as attractive as possible for our community. The Honourable Robert Midwinter spoke about your time away in the UK and I couldn't agree more, going away and building relationships with all our colleagues in the UK, whether they be the government, the CPA, the overseas territories, is a wonderful experience because sometimes it also highlights that we're probably doing a great deal more than we probably acknowledge at times. There's a lot though that we can learn from them and they are good to bounce ideas, etc. and help us to get to a solution quicker.

The solutions, a lot of, the Honourable Ronald Coleman spoke a lot about solutions. I have to say here that when we talk about solutions, we talked about better quality of life inclusivity and we are trying to do everything we can, but we do have a very restricted budget and that's no secret and at this present time as we stand here right now, as Minister. Henry has alluded to, we put some really strong cases forward for Health and Social Care and, indeed, Education, I'm not saying we haven't done it for the other portfolios, but they were the two portfolios that got a lot of recognition and time to be discussed with the virtual BAM, more will happen in next month when they're here on island, so I look to you to also talk about the importance of these very areas. With that said, if we don't, I think I remember saying this in the last formal LegCo, if we don't stick to our strategic objectives and start straying away in all different areas, we will never achieve the big ticket items, so it's really hard for me to be able to hear all of the things that we should address and know that only a pot of money that can go so far. So we will continue to work on the things that builds the foundation for everybody to hopefully get a better quality of life, but solutions isn't just Government based, so I will use this opportunity to say that we as Ministers, while the elected members, the public service, and sometimes even the community, we can do so much more if we continue to work together and solutions can come from others as well, we've got so much on our hands at the moment that it would be interesting and helpful if we had solutions coming from the floor as well. So, I know there is talk about income tax thresholds, again, I know that's something that's been looked at, we have increased the Basic Island Pensions and the Income Related Benefits, but we can only do so much because the budget doesn't allow us to do more. Rewarding our nurses and health professionals, I don't think you'll have anybody around the table that talks about anything different, but just for some context, I'll also use what I know from my own portfolio, which is Education, if the minimum wage goes up like it's intended to do, we will have our Teacher Assistants, that will be literally on the minimum wage, so it's people who are in key areas in which we want improvements that are being impacted, as well. But as soon as you start moving one level, you then need to know how that's going to impact on the others, so it's a huge task to do. I'll then go on to talk about, I don't think I'll say anything more about housing because Minister Brooks has said what he's hoping to do in that area, but I think I need to address what was talked about regarding the use of people saving, savings, sorry. The budget isn't a bottomless pot, as much

as we'd like to be able to help everybody. It does say it's a Basic Island Pension, it isn't a robust pension. I do agree National Insurance; we need to look at things like this whereby people contribute to things like that, so that we can make it more attractive. So if you've got savings, you will not qualify for the Income Related Benefits, that's not something that is new, it is something that that is already been known and until we can change our economic climate, things of that will never, will not change anywhere in the near future. Councillor Thrower, you mentioned the vehicles, all I can say to that at the moment is I can't give you the details. I'll have to ask why it is. It could be because we have good contracts and if you buy in bulk from that contract, it might well be that it comes cheaper. I don't know at this stage, but I can easily check on that for you.

Improving the educational opportunities, Dr Essex, I think everyone around the table will support you in that. And looking at the Immigration, I think you all know that we're looking at those areas. I know, Councillor Robert Midwinter, you mentioned about things that weren't included before going out to consultation from yourselves. I think I made it public in some of the meetings that I attended, that we simply approved the immigration, the start of the immigration consultation. For us to have influenced that in any way was not something we wanted to do, we wanted to hear exactly what it was the community wants us to do. So now that we've gone out and done that, we're leaving it back to the portfolio again to collate all that feedback and then, as Minister Henry has told you that will then go back out to the community, and, indeed, yourselves to be able to talk about what's going to be done.

I think I've pretty much covered, oh, I think Councillor Coleman spoke about Child Services. I do know you said that's something that's still being worked upon, but we must always be careful that we are working in the realm of our policies and regulations because even though we need to make them fit for purpose to St Helena, we have to ensure that the children are in a safe environment.

Mention was made of Bunkers Hill and I won't go into much of that, I think all I can say at this stage is that an agreement was signed and we need to now work as much as we can to ensure that Bunkers Hill can develop, but it is obviously a partnership now between the client and his contractual arrangements with St Helena Government.

Councillor Gillian Brooks and Councillor Bargo, thank you for your comments as well and it was great to hear that there is understanding of the difficult position we find ourselves when it comes on to looking at the budget, and I'm standing here today, as I said, not knowing what we're going to achieve for next year. But, with that said, I would like to tell you and reassure you that the cases put forward by our public service, our portfolios, directors, our Financial Secretary, Chief Secretary and all those, with the help of their team, the help of their team was extremely wonderful to watch and for Ministers this year, to be able to, obviously, put a lot of our thoughts and ideas forward, because last year, if we're very honest, the budget was pretty much finalized, we'd just got into office, it wasn't a whole lot that we knew about the whole process, but I think it came across that we were singing off the same hymn sheet if we made it very clear about what was our strategic objectives and what we would like for our Island and, if I'm fair to our Financial Aid Mission team as well, I think the more information we can keep give them about what it is that we would wish to achieve, their understanding would be better about how they can help us to achieve it. So I would encourage all of you when the Mission is here, to put across what it is that we'd like to achieve, but also to give them ideas of how we can achieve it without just identifying the problems. Let's talk about how we can find solutions for them.

I can't end here today without talking about the time it took Minister Henry and his team at Health and Social Care, but the entire portfolio and all the people of St Helena to prepare to open our Island. I don't think the overwhelming amount of work that went into that can be even justified sometimes until you were in the middle of it. So we got through it. I'm sure I heard a

jingle somewhere that “and we survived it, so I'll use that for today. It's taken a lot of all time, but it was the right decision and to see people out now and Jamestown to be looking as if it's a city again now and not some sleeping town is really, really refreshing for us. And also, telecoms getting across the line and all these other big projects that's hitting us, it does take time, so I do hope that the listening public, and everybody will understand that we don't take this role lightly, it's a whole lot of hard work and with that said, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all my colleagues, and that includes my ministerial team, Speaker, Deputy Speaker, all the wonderful staff that we have down there that look after us, the portfolio directors and their teams, the Chief Sec, Fin Sec, our Core team, the Governor and his team, the Attorney General and his team, but lastly, but most importantly, the community of our beautiful island. I wish you all happy holidays, enjoy the quality time with family and friends and I look forward to coming back in 2023 and going again as if we mean that we want to do all we can to improve the quality of life for our people here. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Member. Well, Honourable Members, that concludes our business for today. Thank you all for your contributions and participation here today. Thank you also for your contributions during the past year, your efforts to support the good peoples of St Helena. I agree with Rob Midwinter that we should be thanking the CPA; I think we all feel that we need to do that because what a wonderful opportunity it is to be able to have them there to be helping us really. The three documents that got passed today took a long time some people say to put them together. They did. On the other hand they didn't, because they were all new things to be put together. I have said this before. You know, it's only been 16 months. I said it the other day again when I said it's only been twelve 12 months, is it sixteen months? Fourteen months, there you go, I'm into the New Year already, it's only been fourteen months. We moved into a new system of government that nobody knew how it was going to operate, nobody knew how it was going to operate, nobody knew really how to put it forward in the first place. You know, if somebody can tell me I'm wrong please tell me so, but nobody knew really, the Ministers had to decide how to be Ministers and so on. But I can go on and on and on, so you know, when people tell you that it's taken a long to do this, that and the other, well, for them it might, but it hasn't been all that very long. But look next year, we'll be able to go forward with all kinds of vigour, the foundation has been set now, it's all been approved and let's see how it goes forward. My job is all about listening and encouraging, teaching in some respects, and so on and, you know, I see people that have developed over this period, yeah. In our own office, I want to get the Order Paper out to the public the whole week before LegCo. We just about achieved it this time round, the public needs to be able to be involved. How do they know how to become involved when they don't know what questions are going to be put on to the Order Paper and so on. This time round we just about did it. I think next year I'm going to maybe introduce a cut off time, so anything that wants to come along after that time needs my express permission for it to be able to be on the Order Paper, otherwise it doesn't get on to the Order Paper, so that the cut off time, you know, if somebody comes up with something that is very, very urgent, we need to consider it to see how to bring it on to the Order Paper, otherwise there's a cut off time, so that people can prepare themselves properly for, you know, this very important meeting, so apart from that.

Tomorrow, of course, we move into recess don't we until the New Year, everybody's looking forward to that I think. I wish you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas 2022 and a peaceful and blessed 2023.

So I now put the question that this Council do adjourn sine die.

Question that the Council do adjourn sine die, put and agreed to.

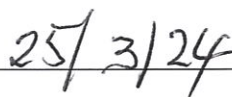
The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Members.

Council adjourned sine die.



Honourable Speaker



Date