



St Helena
Government

ST HELENA GOVERNMENT
PROCEEDINGS OF MINISTERS QUESTION TIME
TUESDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2023
SIXTH SITTING

L.A.I.B ON THE TABLE 25th MARCH 2024

ST. HELENA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE SPEAKER

The Honourable Cyril Keith Gunnell

EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

The Honourable Attorney General, Mr David Ferguson 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 Robert Charles Midwinter
The Honourable Christine Lilian Scipio
The Honourable Julie Dorne Thomas
The Honourable Karl Gavin Thrower
The Honourable Andrew James Turner

OVERSEAS

The Honourable Martin Dave Henry

Legislative Council Office Assistant

Miss Shanice Phillips

PROCEEDINGS OF MINISTERS QUESTION TIME

Tuesday, 26 September, 2023

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

(The Honourable Speaker in the Chair)

ORDER OF THE DAY

1. FORMAL ENTRY OF THE SPEAKER

2. ADDRESS BY THE SPEAKER

Honourable Members. Very good spring morning to you and to all other persons who may be present in the Council chamber, from where the Minister's Question Time is about to take place. Welcome also to those listening to these proceedings, broadcast live from the Council Chamber via SAMS radio one. Thank you SAMS radio one. At the last sitting we had the pleasure of the company of Chloe Freeman. Chloe, a Senior Clerk from the House of Commons, spent four weeks with us as a clerk attachment seconded to the Legislative Council. We wait to see her report. We welcome back Minister Mark Brooks, who has attended business meetings in London and Gibraltar from 3rd to 16th of September. Not present today is Minister Martin Henry. Minister Henry departed the island on Saturday last week to represent Saint Helena at the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference to be held in Ghana, Accra, Ghana, from 30th September to 6th October 2023. The Member's focus today is on the sixth Meeting of Ministers Question Time. The topic that the Council has decided for this meeting is Secondary Education. A copy of the Order Paper was this morning published on the SHG website and in accordance with Standing Orders, the Chief Minister was made aware of the topic ahead of this Meeting, and on this occasion Ministers were made aware of the questions. There are seven questions on the Order Paper that have been listed in alphabetical order, but will be selected randomly for response within the one hour that has been allocated. Starting from the first question, the Clerk and timekeeper for this Minister's Question Time is Miss Shanice Phillips. Miss Phillips, may we have the first question, please?

The Speaker –
Honourable Dr Corinda Essex?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. As is becoming a habit, I once again rise to ask permission on a point of order for the suspension of Standing Orders in accordance with Order 19 and Order 21 of the Standing Orders of the Legislative Council.

The Speaker –

You may Honourable Member, Speaker is there a seconder?

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

I need to move.

The Speaker –

Oh yeah. Sorry. I do beg your pardon, Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that Rule five and Rule six of Order nine of Standing Orders be suspended for the duration of Minister's Question Time to be held today.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Is there a seconder? Councillor Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

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

The Speaker –

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

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, this motion seeks to suspend rule 6 of Order 9 of Standing Orders so that the restriction to only one supplementary question per each substantive question will not apply during Minister's Question Time today. As we are all aware, this has been the format that we have used since we instituted Minister's Question Time and feedback from the public indicates that they very much appreciate the debate that we're able to have in this forum, and therefore, they wish the suspension of Standing Orders to be continued. In order for the parameters for Questions in the House as set out in Order 8 to be applicable, following suspension of rule 6 of Order 9, it is necessary to suspend rule 5 so Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Does anyone else wish to speak? So I put the question that Rule 5 and Rule 6 of Standing Order 9 is suspended for the duration of this Minister's Question Time. All those in favour say aye.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker –

So for the listening public, because Rule 5 and Rule 6 of Order 9 of Standing Orders have been suspended, it is possible for additional supplementary questions to be asked. If the Orders were not suspended, a Member putting a question would be limited to asking only one supplementary question. Clerk. May we now have the first question, please?

3.

QUESTIONS

Question No. 1 - The Honourable Ronald Coleman to ask the Honourable Chief Minister:

The Speaker –

Honourable Ronald Coleman?

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister inform this House, on how the students at Prince Andrew School did with their grades on the latest GCSE's and if it is possible to compare these grades with other students in the in the UK.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker and good morning everyone. Student attainment in the different subject areas for this school year at GCSE are as follows. So percentage passes for A* to C or points 4 to 9. English language which is a core subject 49%, English literature 92% and I'd like to add that English literature is not a core subject and is chosen by students in collaboration with teachers if they believe they have the ability to sit both English language and English literature. Mathematics 41%, which is a core subject and the overall IT pass is 51%, which is a core subject at the present time because they know that is due to change. But if we talk about all the different IT courses, ICT we had 80% pass mark, Computer Science 60%, ICDL 100% and 0% for FS ICT. The overall science passes again a core subject 41%. But you do have Coordinated Science. And for those of you in my age group, I'd say double science. That was 100% and single science was 29%. Again, bearing in mind that Science is a core subject and students would have chosen if they wanted to do the Coordinated Science, the double Science, Geography 50%, Marine Science 0%, which was five students sat that, Food and Nutrition 63%. Design technology 20%, Travel and Tourism 0%, one student sat Business Studies 33%. Physical education or PE 100%, History 0%, two students sat Child Development 75%, Psychology 40%, Sociology 33% and 0% for Art. A direct comparison of year 11 public examination results to the UK would not be a fair one. The total number of our year 11 undertaking public examinations in the May June session 2023 was 37, compared to 593,094 year 11 in England. Although we follow the national curriculum for England and Wales, statistically, one student in our year 11 cohort on Saint Helena represents 2.7%, compared to 0.00016% for one year 11 student in England. Our socio economic factors and influences differ when compared to the UK, whether regional or national. We do not have access to consistent professional support programs as they do in the UK, especially in terms of our children with special educational needs and social, emotional and mental health. This would therefore not be a like for like comparison. In addition, following the UK announcement from Ofqual in December 22, it states that expected overall results in 23 would be much closer to pre-pandemic years than since 2020. This means that results in 2023 would be lower than in 2022. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Chief Minister. Honourable Ronald Coleman.

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I just want to thank the Chief Minister for that in-depth reply. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thanks very much, Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can the Honourable Chief Minister indicate what percentage of those pupils who did not obtain grades A to C obtained D grades?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Unfortunately, I don't have that information with me here today. It's very much an operational matter when it comes to that level of detail, but I'm happy to be able to get that information for you. Honourable Dr Essex, and give you some percentage levels on that. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Next question please.

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

The Speaker –

The Honourable Rosemary Bargo.

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister tell this Council? What are the expected benefits that Prince Andrew's school will reap with the improved internet provisions?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. The expected benefits that Prince Andrew School will reap from improved internet provisions include the following, but are not limited. And these include opportunity to use more interactive resources in the classroom across the curriculum to support teaching and learning, such as YouTube, online quizzes, etc. This will engage all the different learning styles, hence making the topics more fun and accessible to all. Staff and students will be able to take full advantage of the online tools that are free for educational establishments, for example, the Google Suite products such as Google Glass, etc. This will foster better communications between parents and the school. Parents can be updated daily on their child in relation to their behaviour and learning, including homework tasks, progress and attainment. They will be more aware of school events as they can be reminded daily and can have more interaction with staff. We would have more efficient ways for working remotely or accessing school resources. Preparing and building resources for teaching takes up a huge chunk of time. With increased speeds, these resources can be streamed live, allowing more time to focus on the learning. Teachers and students doing research activities will be able to access more content at faster speeds, covering more in their sessions. There would be no reason to have certain restrictions in place because of the bandwidth

constraints, leading to less frustrated staff and students boosting collaboration and working on school projects. With teachers having support from external resources, there will be more possibility for schools on island to link with other schools more frequently, sharing our different cultures and experiences. Staff could use this as exposure to other learning environments, and we hope that more engaged school community, because of the discontinued free internet window from midnight to 6 a.m. and children can now be in bed at a reasonable time, as there would be no more need to stay up late to access resources for homework tasks. The distant learning curriculum could increase as media quality will improve, providing the option to offer more lessons running. At the same time, increased training opportunities for our staff via online courses, webinars, bespoke training and CPD's and that is for the professional development. I just realized I said CPD's online testing can be facilitated simultaneously and be completed in weeks instead of being staged over the half term, benefiting the school by having feedback and detailed analysis more promptly. And as I'm talking about this, I'd just like to do a big shout out to our IT staff within education, because I know that they are very excited about this journey and some of the things they're talking about. I have to be honest, it's we always say it's wind shear for us, so I'd like to just recognize them and the excitement that's going through the schools at the moment as we get ready for this journey. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Rosemary Bargo.

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you, Chief Minister. I think that is extremely excellent news for everyone here on the island and the children. And sorry, can I make a statement as such?

The Speaker –

You may.

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Also looking at the grades of last year, hopefully this will go a long way in helping the kids as well. You know, up their grades a bit as well. Also Chief Minister, can you tell this House what percentage of the Education budget for Prince Andrew's School is currently being utilised on internet charges?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm not entirely sure if I've got this correct on the top of my head without chasing the budget right now, if it's just for Prince Andrew, but I know 50% of our budget overall goes to communication. I'd also just like to add as well, which wasn't on the list and you know, as we get talking about this, we talk about the midnight window, if I can call it that. But it's also the amount of time that teachers actually take up for the lunchtime activities so that students can actually sit and do IT or have access to IT within their free periods, if I can call it that, but also in their lunchtime period. So that is accessible. And as much as we'd like homework to be done in the home as well, there is the opportunity to do it within school hours. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Rosemary Bargo.

The Hon. Rosemary Bargo –

Thank you, Chief Minister. Can you tell me what your expected savings is likely to be on internet charges at this time?

The Speaker –

Thank you.. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Very good question Mr Speaker, very proactive question. But I think at this time is a bit early for us to say because as you know the announcement was made only earlier this month. And I know that IT across Saint Helena Government is trying to work out exactly how they will share the internet experience. So I think it's a bit early to talk about. I think there might be more savings when we obviously have a full fibre optic network more than it is, what is the term now? Our normal network connected to the cable landing station.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Honourable Chief Minister gave a very comprehensive and exciting list of improvements. Yes. Can she please indicate the time frame for the implementation of those?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

I don't have exact timelines to this, Dr Essex, but I would assume the fact that is being given as what they hope to achieve. I know that our IT savvy's within education have been getting ready for this, so I'm assuming that most of it will come online as soon as possible, as soon as it goes live on 1st of October. I'd like to think within that month or two they would be pushing to get this rolled out. Thank you. Can I just take this opportunity because I have a proactive education as well? I can actually give the answer to Dr Essex's question from earlier, and that is that there were 50 D grades in GCSEs, seven students in maths, six students in language, five students with single science, one student in IT, two students in computer science and three students for FS IT. The rest was in other non-core subjects. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, the Honourable Minister mentioned the benefits of being able to undertake study at home and the removal of the free internet window. I'm just mindful that we do have low income households that may not be able to afford the upgraded packages. Would there be any consideration for support to students who will lose out on the loss of the free window?

The Speaker –

Would there be any support? Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I said before, as far as I know, there wouldn't be any support at this time. And as I said, as one of the additional pieces, I do know that students are given enough time to complete homework so that if they don't have access at home, they can provide it during school hours. Thank you, Mr Speaker. I understood.

The Speaker –

Honourable Karl Thrower.

The Hon. Karl Thrower–

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Would the Honourable Chief Minister be able to say if there are any plans to help students also with not just the connectivity at home, but also help guide them on what hardware they need at home in order to complete homework and things like that?

The Speaker –

Okay. Thank you very much, Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. To be quite honest with you, Councillor Karl Thrower, I don't have the answer to that today. I don't think there will be anything that students will be expected to do at home that isn't accessible via the normal internet. If it's anything else that they require, it would be done in school hours. But if that changes as we progress forward, then by all means, that's something we'll have to consider.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Thrower?

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

No, I'm sorry. Just to clarify slightly, what I was referring to more was the likelihood of, say, a student being able to borrow an iPad so that they can do their work at home and things like that. More about the physical equipment rather than the internet connectivity. Okay.

The Speaker –

Can you assist Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I don't want to make promises here today, but that is something that we are considering. And that's as far as I'll go.

The Speaker –

Okay. Fair enough. Next question please.

Question No. 3 - The Honourable Gillian Brooks to ask the Chief Minister

The Speaker –

The Honourable Gillian Brooks?

The Hon. Gillian Brooks –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can the Honourable Chief Minister tell this Council whether Prince Andrew School offers any studies leading to formal qualifications in areas of dramatic and cultural arts?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Sorry. Thank you, Mr Speaker. So the short answer to this is no. This is an area that we recognise is lacking within Prince Andrew School. And there was an initiative a few years back to secure funding from the TC budget to recruit a person with the required skills, knowledge and qualification to be able to teach the subject, which could lead to a formal qualification. However, due to budget prioritizing, this post was not approved, as priority was given to posts in the core areas of English, Maths, Science and IT or Computer Science. This continues to be an area that we would love to improve upon in Secondary. However, with the current budget environment and the current staff expertise, this is simply not possible at this time. We do, however, offer music and art on our curriculum and in our enrichment sessions. On a Friday afternoon, we also offer music and song or choir for our key stage three students. As a result of this, we were able to showcase our students talents in our performance at the end of last school year, which was a pleasure to see if I'm honest, because I haven't seen that for so long, and it was nice to see our students being showcased and doing extremely well as well. So having a drama or dance club is something that we are looking to work on. Once we can get our staffing levels up to capacity, and we have time for staff members to help to run this. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Gillian Brooks.

The Hon. Gillian Brooks –

I just want to say, first of all, thank you, Chief Minister, and it was indeed a pleasure to be at that end of school performance. Can I just ask then, is there any thought to joining properly with organisations such as Creative Saint Helena just to get some sort of dramatic? And I know it may not lead to formal qualification, but just is there any thought of interacting there?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I know Creative Saint Helena goes into Primary. I can't confirm at this present time if they do go into Prince Andrew, but I'm assuming that if they did, they would go into the enrichment lessons on Fridays. I think we also need to accept that our students at Prince Andrew are at different levels, and they are embracing actually the music and drama and singing, etc. that's now being put on the curriculum. So I'm guessing if there is gaps that need to be filled because of interest, then people like Creative Saint Helena would be called upon if they aren't already. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Gillian Brooks.

The Hon. Gillian Brooks –

Yes thank you, Mr Speaker. And thank you, Chief Minister.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Next question, please.

Question No 4 - The Honourable Andrew Turner to ask the Chief Minister

The Speaker –

The Honourable Andrew Turner?

The Hon. Andrew Turner –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister tell this Council what alternative provisions are being made for students who are struggling within the school environment?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. In education, we recognise that the school environment is not ideal for all students and those who have SEND, which I'll explain is Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, or SEMH, which is the Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties, sometimes struggle with their learning and behaviour in the normal school environment. Unlike the UK, we do not have access to the professional support services or special schools to cater for such students. So we have to work within the resources that we have rather than allowing these students to struggle, which at times leads to them being continuously suspended from school, resulting in them missing in their education. Through our inclusion service, we have developed an alternative education program that offers support to these students. This program allows students to have their learning outside of the school environment, and to also have the opportunity to engage in work related learning or life skill opportunities to help prepare them for the world of work and their adult life. Each student has their own bespoke program to meet their academic needs and their career aspirations. In school, we also offer an alternative curriculum, which gives an opportunity for students to access some of their learning in school and the remainder outside of the school environment. Currently, we have four students year 11 who are on the Alternative Education program with the Inclusion Service. This is still a work in progress and we are working to develop this as we go. Premises is a challenge when catering for these students within the Education Portfolio and at times finding suitable work placements. It is therefore appropriate for me to take this opportunity to thank those persons and businesses who do offer support to our students and give them the opportunity to learn in a work environment. Without you, we would not be able to manage this programme. Additionally, I would also take this opportunity to encourage those within the business community who believe you could potentially assist us with work placement to get in touch with the school, Prince Andrew or indeed Career Access. So, Councillor Turner, have used your question to also do a shout out for support. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner –

Just to thank the Chief Minister for her response. And that was going to be my supplementary anyway.

Question No 5 - The Honourable Karl Thrower to ask the Chief Minister

The Speaker –

The Honourable Karl Thrower.

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister please tell this Council, what access do Prince Andrew's school students have on site to healthy, tasty and nutritious food and drink?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Out of all the questions, I think this is the interesting question Honourable Karl Thrower. Accessing healthy, tasty and nutritious food and drink on island regularly is a struggle, let alone at Prince Andrew School. Many years ago, Prince Andrew School had a tuck shop. This was operated by a private individual or business coming into school. I am unsure of the reasons why this was discontinued. I am led to believe that there was an initiative some years ago to reinstate the tuck shop, with the proviso that only healthy foods would be sold, but for whatever reason, this was also not taken forward. Some years ago, a vending machine was put into the school for students to access quick, healthy snacks. But again, this was not cost effective and was discontinued. There are pros and cons in relation to re-establishing such an establishment within the school, and is likely to be something that our new PTA may wish to evaluate and decide upon. We have to be mindful, however, that healthy foods are generally expensive, and we would not wish to put additional financial pressures on parents or students, or create a divide within the school in relation to who can or cannot afford such a service. Currently in school, all students bring packed lunches and we do encourage healthy lunchboxes throughout the Education Portfolio. If there are students who do not have a lunch, I can advise you that the school does provide for them for that day. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Chief Minister. Honourable Karl Thrower.

The Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister be able to tell us, on average, how many students the school does provide for in a day?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is pleasing to note that the number is very low, and at present they are not catering for any. But at intervals they do have one off or two within a day that they may cater for, but it's not something that is a huge expense.

The Speaker –

Okay. Thank you very much. Honourable Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Could the Honourable Chief Minister say if consideration been given to utilising the centralised cooking that's now being done at the CCC for the Health Directorate and sort of utilising the fact that, that kitchen is already operating to essentially transport meals to.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Not as far as I know. I'm not entirely sure if the demand is there for it, but it is something, again, that could be looked into to see if that is something that the students would do. We have very caring staff actually throughout the Education Portfolio. So I know of teachers actually when there's a student that doesn't have a lunch for that particular day who will actually ensure that they provide or share from their own lunches. So but as I said before, I don't think it's of a regularity or indeed something that's occurring on a regular basis for them to have considered that. But I'm sure that is something I can ask. I can ask that question of Education. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Andrew Turner.

The Hon. Andrew Turner –

Sorry. It's one sort of quick follow up question on that. I know you mentioned there was monitoring done of when the students necessarily don't have a lunch. The school steps in. But has any work been done with the parents to engage on how many are struggling to afford to provide those pack lunches?

The Speaker –

Okay, Thank you, Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Obviously, engagement happens with parents. That is an area that Education and if I'm honest, I think Government would like to improve upon throughout because engagement with the community is very difficult. And I know that Prince Andrew has been doing some good initiatives now to try and engage parents to incorporate them within their students learning. As far as I know, probably not. But I'm sure teachers would be through the form classes, would be taking note of what students are coming to school with, but as far as I know, it hasn't been raised. I'm guessing that that would be across Portfolio interest as well, and nobody's brought that to my attention.

Question No 6 - The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Chief Minister

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Will the Honourable Chief Minister provide an update regarding finalisation of the Constitution relating to the establishment of a Scholarship Trust Fund?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Sorry, Mr Speaker, a draft of the Scholarship Trust Fund Constitution was submitted to the AG's Chambers on the 29th of June of this year for guidance, and this was followed up on the 2nd of August. It needs to be acknowledged, however, that this request was submitted along with another item for follow up for Education, with the latter being the most priority of the two. With that said, last week AG's Chambers provided feedback on the draft Constitution. This feedback will now be considered and the draft Constitution amended to address the feedback received and the advice given before referring back for review once this has been finalised. Elected Members will be informed. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you Chief Minister, for that update. Once again, I ask for a timescale, please.

The Speaker –

Time scale. Thank you, Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am not able to give a time scale. It will go to our next Advisory Board, which will be in October now. But I can't give a timescale on the legal advice that we will require to be able to kick start this, but it is something that we are keen to move on with, and it would be unfair of me to give a timeline on legal advice when that's something that's very much dictated to by the AG's Chambers. And as much as the Scholarship Trust Fund is important for Education, I know that there's some pressing Legislation that the AG's Chambers is dealing with outside of Education that I'm sure would take priority. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Chief Minister. Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I find the situation as one of concern because the students who would potentially benefit from the Scholarship Trust Fund would be due to start their academic careers in UK in mid-2024. Can the Honourable Chief Minister please give a commitment that this should be in place in good time prior to their departure for studies in the UK?

The Speaker –

Okay. Thanks very much, Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Again, as I said, we will not be dilly dallying with this. The advice is now being received and we will do everything we can to make sure we work with this and bring it to the next Advisory Board Meeting. But there's no way we can confirm a Constitution without legal advice and support.

The Speaker –

I see. Thank you very much, Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can the Chief Minister clarify whether, in fact, legal advice has already been received? I gathered from what she said earlier that it had, in which case I'm not quite sure what further advice is going to be necessary.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yes. I just said in my response that the legal advice was received last week. So obviously we will consider that advice and put that into the Constitution, but then it would need to go back to ensure that it is legally supported and that we haven't done anything outside of that. It shouldn't be a long term process, but I don't want to say that we'll have it correct in the first round. So as I said, we will hopefully be putting that back to the AG Chambers within a month.

The Speaker –

Thank you for that clarification, Dr Corinda Essex? Thank you very much. Next question please.

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

The Speaker –

The Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

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

The Speaker –

You may.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Firstly, Mr Speaker, I need to declare an interest as one of my sons is currently on the existing Sixth Form scheme and the other is likely to be joining this in some form or another after the current academic year. Secondly, Mr Speaker, I wish to thank the Honourable Minister for the detailed information that she provided last week in response to the questions raised in July. It is unfortunate that my question was submitted prior to receiving this information, as this does actually cover what I wish to ask. However, for the benefit of the listening public, I would still like to proceed with my question, if I may.

The Speaker –
Please go ahead.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –
Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, can the Honourable Chief Minister tell this Council, if she is proposing any changes to the current Sixth Form system whereby there are four separate routes open to students for continued education post 16 years of age?

The Speaker –
Thank you very much, Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –
Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Robert Midwinter for clarifying that that information has been sent, and they'll be pleased to know when they press send, receive after this session, that I've also sent our new Apprenticeship Policy as well. I did say it would be in September, so I think Education has done well with that. So good on all of Education for getting the Sixth Form's policy out and the Apprenticeship. I think the key to talk about Sixth Form policy is that it is a revision to an existing policy. The Apprenticeship Policy is the new policy. So just so that I can make clarity on that, the current Sixth Form policy with the four separate routes that you made mention of Honourable Midwinter for students has been in operation now since September 2022. We are now in the second year of running this programme. For people who are not aware, the four routes are as follows: The academic route for students who meet the required criteria and grades and are able to follow full time education in Prince Andrew; the vocational route for students who want to pursue more work related learning and experience and upgrade their Math and English and gain a qualification in their work area; the blended route for students who want to have a mix of some academic to A-level or Level three studies, and also do work related work, learning and experience. And finally, the supported route, which is for students with special educational needs and disabilities, where they can get support whilst on this programme and develop their skills and ability in a particular field. Currently, we have 53 students accessing our Sixth Form policy via the following routes: So we've got 10 who are doing academic, 29 vocational, 6 blended and eight supported. And the areas of placement: eight in construction, seven in automotives, three in teaching, one at the public library, four for police and rescue services, three in farming and butchery, one marine enforcement, one electrical, one in hospitality, one within port control, three in non-Government organisations New Horizons, Arts and Crafts, one in accounting, one at the laboratory and one in media. And as I said earlier, in addition to our Sixth Form policy, we have introduced a new Apprenticeship Policy, which was approved earlier this month. This scheme has attracted five new apprenticeships into our Health Portfolio, which is extremely encouraging. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –
Thank you very much, Honourable Robert Midwinter.

The Hon. Robert Midwinter –
Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I wish to thank the Honourable Chief Minister for her very comprehensive response. That's very good to see that and also to hear that we will also now be in receipt of the newly established Apprenticeship Policy. My next question was in relation to that, and particularly how this new

Apprenticeship Policy differs from the supported and vocational routes within the Sixth Form policy in terms mainly of working hours and amounts paid.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Are you able to respond, Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

I'll give it a try. Mr Speaker, I think the biggest difference between the Sixth Form policy and the Apprenticeship policy is that Education pays for the Sixth Form policy. And let's make it very clear. It's not a salary, it's an allowance. And from the top of my head, I think it's £250 with the Apprenticeship scheme that is paid for by the business or the Portfolio. So that's the big difference. So it's not connected to Education, in respect of an allowance or a salary. But what I can also add about the Apprenticeship policy being the first one within health is that they do two weeks at the College whereby they do the in classroom teaching, and then they go into the workplace and they actually put into practice what they've learnt within the College. And then they do about six weeks, I think, and then they come back to the College and do the same process all over again. I would encourage everybody, and that is listeners as well, to listen to our recent, I think it was, In-scope programme from Education, because the last one we did focused primarily on the Sixth Form policy and the Apprenticeship policy. So I'm sure and it would have been in the newspaper as well. So I'm sure you'll get a lot of detail from that. But now that we've obviously distributed the Apprenticeship policy, I'm hoping that that will give you more detail. But in respect of the payments or the salaries, that is the area of difference. I hope that helps you Honourable Midwinter. Thank you.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, and the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex first.

The Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, can the Honourable Chief Minister indicate whether they are likely to be any changes to the present system for student allowances in the forthcoming financial year?

The Speaker –

Thank you, Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I think it's a little bit too early for us to say. I'm actually having my MTEF Meeting with my Portfolio tomorrow and noting that we are being asked to establish a flat line budget, which we did get an indication from FCDO that that's what it would be this year and obviously look at doing a 4% reduction, I think it's very difficult to say. And if I link that to the Honourable Rosemary Bargo's question with regards to what savings could come in respect of communication, all of that needs to be looked at in detail to determine if there are any savings or efficiencies that we can do now with this new internet provisions that we will have, and whether that will allow such a revision to their policy. But at this time, Dr Essex, I can't give you that kind of information. I'm sorry.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Ronald Coleman, I think you? Do you still want to? Go ahead.

The Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I just like to ask that with the payments; if the rates for minimum wage is applied for the Sixth Form and the Apprentice schemes. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Honourable Chief Minister.

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Thank you, Mr Speaker. That's why I clearly made reference to a Sixth Form allowance, because it's not connected to the minimum wage. It's about what Education can afford from the budget that we have. The Apprenticeship, however, would be connected because they are being employed by the Portfolio or the business. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much.

4.

CLOSING REMARKS BY THE SPEAKER

The Speaker –

I think that just about does it with lots of time to spare today. Honourable Members, that then concludes the Minister's Question Time for September. Honourable Chief Minister?

The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

I just want to say this publicly, if this is okay to say and if it's not, Mr Speaker, I'm sure you will tell me.

The Speaker –

Please go ahead.

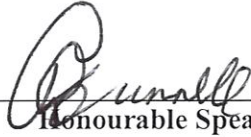
The Hon. Julie Thomas (Chief Minister) –

Obviously, you made mention that I did receive the questions a little late, a little earlier this time, which I know is not normal practice. And I would ask if Councillors would consider this because even if it's not, I'm not expecting a huge amount of time. But it does give us the opportunity to provide real good information, if I can put it that way, because a lot of the questions dig down into some operational matters as well. So it could be something that could be asked in scrutiny as we go forward, because when it comes to attainments etc, although we are and when I say we, I'm talking Ministers now are responsible for the performance of our Portfolios, a lot of this information goes into the detail we wouldn't have at our fingertips, if we only had the questions at half eight in the morning. So it's just something that I would suggest that we consider, and it would be good to get feedback from the public, as well as to whether they feel that the information I was able to give today, because this was shared a little earlier than should have been, but I think it gave comprehensive responses and maybe more information that the public would find useful. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

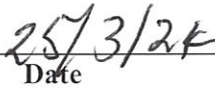
The Speaker –

Thank you very much, and I'm glad you took that opportunity to say that. It is something I have been considering myself. I mentioned it purely to make the public understand that questions were put forward a little bit early. And it was through a mistake that it was done. So there is some thoughts there for some

things there to be considered. But I will leave that, of course, to Councillors to consider. Honourable Members that then obviously does conclude Question Time for September. Thank you all for your contributions and thank you to the listening public. We hope you found the questions and answers on Secondary Education both interesting and informative. As usual, we will look forward to your feedback. I wish you all a very pleasant day ahead. Thank you very much.



Honourable Speaker



Date