



St Helena  
Government

ST HELENA GOVERNMENT  
PROCEEDINGS OF MINISTERS QUESTION TIME  
TUESDAY, 25 JUNE 2024  
TWELFTH SITTING

*Laid on the Table 27 March 2025*



**ST. HELENA**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

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**THE SPEAKER**

The Honourable Cyril Keith Gunnell

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBER**

The Honourable Acting Attorney General - Simon Dykes

**ELECTED MEMBERS**

The Honourable Mark Alan Brooks  
The Honourable Gillian Ann 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

**Clerk of Councils**

**Miss Anita Legg**



## **PROCEEDINGS OF MINISTERS QUESTION TIME**

Tuesday, 25 June 2024

The Council met at 10 am in the Council Chamber, Jamestown

### **ORDER OF THE DAY**

#### **1. FORMAL ENTRY BY THE SPEAKER**

#### **2. ADDRESS BY THE SPEAKER**

Good morning Hon Members. A very good morning, to you and to everyone else present in the Council Chamber on the occasion of this the 12th meeting of Minister's Question Time. Good morning also to all those who have tuned in to listen to this live broadcast. In accordance with Order 9, Rule 3 of the Standing Orders of the Legislative Council, the topic chosen by Councillors for this sitting is Saint Helena's Labour Market Strategy 2020-2035. In accordance also with Standing Orders, the Chief Minister was made aware of the topic ahead of this meeting, and an hour before Ministers Question Time (MQT) commenced, the questions submitted by Councillors were sent to Ministers. According to established practice the Order Paper should have been published on the SHG website this morning. There are six questions on the Order Paper; they have been listed alphabetically but are to be selected randomly for response. All of the questions are directed to the Hon Chief Minister. As I always say but mostly for members of the public, now that the Standing Orders have been amended to remove the limitation on Councillors in respect of the number of supplementary questions they may ask, this also means it is possible for another Minister to give support once the Minister to whom the question has been directed has answered the original question. For those not familiar with the method used for Members wanting to catch the Speaker's eye, we operate a system whereby a red light is switched on to indicate that a Member wishes to speak. Unless you are rising on a point of order or information, please don't draw the Speaker's attention when someone else is speaking because that could interrupt that person, which is an infringement of Rule 15. Up to one hour has been allocated for questions and answers. Clerk, may we have the first question please?

Hon Chief Minister –

I just wanted to advise the listening public that when this topic was shared, as Mr. Speaker mentioned to me on the 18th of June, to say that the MQT would focus on St Helena Labour Market Strategy 2020 to 2035, I did respond the following day saying that although I have no objection to the topic, I did raise in Formal LegCo earlier this month that the Educational Review and the review of the Labour Market Strategy was only starting to commence due to the staffing issues being experienced throughout Education over the past months. Therefore our focus from January of this year has primarily been around service provision. Now that we have our new Head Teacher for Prince Andrew School in the post and that of our interim Director, Marie Horton, it is envisaged that works will commence in these key areas. This is indeed the case however, initial discussions around the Labour Market Strategy only took place at the management level two weeks ago. From doing this review, it has become blatantly



obvious that although Education, Skills and Employment have been given the responsibility of the Labour Market Strategy, Education will require major input from other areas of government prior to consultation with wider stakeholders. These areas are that of the Economist, HR and the Statistician. Since the discussion, my management has sent me the document with our proposed changes, which I will need to review and agree on, and which I hope to do this week before requesting that the document be sent to the other areas of government. This confirms that we are in the infancy stage of updating the strategy, whereas I did suggest that if the topic was to be tabled in August, I would be in a better position to share work undertaken and reasons for such. Currently, I will not be in a position to discuss changes that will be made as Education, Skills, and Employment have not had the opportunity to share with other sections of government. I just thought it was important that that be told to the listening public as it was told to Mr. Speaker and all Councillors should any of the questions I'm unable to answer, because of the review that we'll be taking going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you Honourable Chief Minister. You will note that I was hesitant to allow you to rise on a point of information. I would perhaps put that to other Members if they wanted to rise on any points in the same vein as well. I may not do that, but the opportunity would be there. The Labour Market Strategy, Honourable Chief Minister has been in place for four years. The Labour Market Strategy has been topical and is of public interest. The questions submitted were submitted in accordance with Elected Members Standing Orders. They can verbally and validly be asked. We will have to see what the questions are and I will rule against any that are not valid Honourable Chief Minister. Honorable Dr Corinda Essex, I think you want to raise a point of information.

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. On a point of information I would like to reassure the Honourable Chief Minister that we are indeed fully aware that the review is in its infancy therefore, the questions do not relate to the review or any new proposals. The questions relate to what has been taking place up to now in relation to the current Labour Market Strategy. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. First question please.

3.

### QUESTIONS

*Question No. 1 - The Honourable Andrew Turner to ask the Honourable Chief Minister*

The Speaker –

The Honourable Andrew Turner.

Hon. Andrew Turner

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Can the Honourable Chief Minister say how the implementation of Career Access St Helena and the establishment of the HR Community of Practice, as referred to in the Labour Market Strategy, contributed to the effectiveness of workforce development in St Helena?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much, Honourable Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. The implementation of Career Access St Helena took place in late 2021, in fact it was one of the first things I had the privilege of opening when we came into this Council. As we go through the questions I think today, my point of information will come through clearly. The Labour Market Strategy, as you rightly said Mr. Speaker, has been in place for four years. At no time has this government suggested that it was a priority for us but the elements offered have been, but the Career Access St Helena unfortunately hadn't reached its full potential due to staffing issues. We now have in place only since a few months ago, a Career Access Manager. For a long period of time our Manager for the St Helena Community College and responsibility for training, was actually manning the place herself simply because we didn't have staff available. So as much as we'd like Career Access St Helena to take the lead when it comes to employment they haven't established or been able to achieve what was set out to be achieved, simply because of that. A lot of the emphasis has been placed on the apprenticeship schemes as well as the sixth form policies, which we have approved during our tenure here, as well as working with the Treasury and Economic and Development Portfolio in respect of the unemployed. So some of what was being undertaken by Career Access has now gone back to the Social Benefits Office, because we felt that that was something that would be better, would be more effective use of staff resources. Now that we've got a Career Access Manager in place, we are hoping that we can gain some momentum, but unfortunately, it's been slow because of capacity issues. When it comes to the establishment of the HR Community of Practice, I have to be honest I've never heard of such a group. By speaking very briefly with HR prior to coming in here today, it would seem that this has not been implemented because people within HR were unaware of such. With that said however, I think we do need to take into consideration what the issues for St Helena are, and that is capacity and capability throughout St Helena's Government, but also within the private sector. So to be coming up with the Human Resources Community of Practice, I wouldn't say it's a bad idea. I think it would be good if all stakeholders could come together, SHG and Private Sector, but as far as I'm aware this has not been achieved thus far. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much Honourable Chief Minister. Councillor Turner.

Hon. Andrew Turner –

Mr. Speaker, just to thank the Honourable Chief Minister for that response and for the level of openness and honesty in the fact that certain parts of this haven't been implemented, in terms of what Career Access Saint Helena will be going forward. Perhaps that's best not to ask, because of the review, but is it intended for St Helena in the short term to grow to its full initial intent. I know it's been as you say, it's been operating on a reduced level for some time, is the aim now to run, since it's full team, for a few months?

The Speaker –

Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I'd like to tell you yes, but even now that we have a Career Access Manager in place we're operating with two staff members. I think what needs to be highlighted is when Career Access was established, no funding came across to Education, Skills and Employment to provide the services, so on an already stretched budget, and I don't want to go into potential other questions that are going to be asked, but noting the increase in special



educational needs and disability, social, emotional and mental health issues, and ensuring that we run an effective and essential, inclusive, inclusion office as well, Career Access hasn't got the funding that it requires for some of these. Hence the review, I think, will determine what type of funding will be required if we are to implement what was hopefully, what was put out in the Labour Market Strategy because funding didn't come with it. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Turner.

Hon. Andrew Turner –

Just to thank again the Honourable Chief Minister for that response. I think there are some follow ups to that, but they'd probably be better placed under other questions.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. No further questions on that. Next question please.

***Question No. 2 - The Honourable Robert Midwinter to ask the Honourable Chief Minister***

The Speaker –

The Honourable Robert Midwinter.

Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker before I ask my question I just need to declare that I am a member of the SHAPE board so this is of particular interest to me.

The Speaker –

Noted.

Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Can the Honourable Chief Minister tell this Council what medium to long-term strategies have been developed by her Government in order to assist individuals with special educational needs and disabilities in achieving their maximum potential and ensure that inclusion is normalised in the workplace?

The Speaker –

Thank you Councillor. The Honourable Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Obviously Education, Skills and Employment does have discussions and conversations with other organisations, if I can name SHAPE, and we'd like to do more work with such non-government organisations so that we can make inclusion normalises in the workplace. However, that comes with the funding as well, because we'll need to ensure access is available for such persons. In addition, I think this is where Health and Education will need to work together, we need to be able to assess because not all of these are disabilities. To be able to walk, some are because they need proper assessments, from a mental health perspective etc., capability in these areas needs to improve. You will have heard us talk about the need for Clinical Psychologists and all other specialists' requirements within Education, but also within Health, and that has been very restrictive in the last year or two. Now we've managed to set up remote working for most of these but now it's a case of training our assistants etc., to be able to look out for signs of all these things and for the assessments to be done. This year we came



very close to some students not being able to do the written examinations because the assessment couldn't be carried out. Thankfully, we managed to get it at very late notice. But, those are the types of pressures we're working under within Education, simply because we don't have the expertise on island, and the growing need for our special educational needs and disability students to cater for. Yes, we have the inclusion office as I mentioned, near Prince Andrew School, but even having access to the rooms within the different schools, to allow students to take that break from the classroom when they require it. I know at the moment within Prince Andrew, the new Head Teacher is looking at different policies, and we've had some business cases put together of what is needed to improve the facilities to allow us to better cater for special educational needs and disabilities. So unfortunately Honourable Robert Midwinter, there's lots of work still to be done to be able to cater to special educational needs and disabilities within Education, and in the wider diaspora as well. And this is the reason why we're saying it's becoming even more difficult when Health has such a growing need and Education is falling behind. Hence there is no space within the budget to say squeeze anymore, especially within Education. If I can be so blunt, it's there because our standards now are dropping below what we would like. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Midwinter.

Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would first like to acknowledge and commend the Chief Minister on the work that is being done by the Education Section to look at Special Education Needs and Disabilities. Clearly, what I'm looking at is the Labour Market Strategy and beyond education and how we ensure that people with special needs are included in the workplace. So can I ask the Chief Minister as Education Minister, if any draft policy or legislation relating to persons with special education needs and disabilities relating to the workplace is currently being progressed?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honourable Chief Minister

Hon. Chief Minister –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. As far as I'm aware, I haven't seen any policies come past my desk at this time. But I think it's also important that I mention here there's been a lot of delay for the Ministerial team in establishing even an Advisory Board for Central Support Services, and their first meeting for Central Support Services is happening tomorrow, so hopefully that will now be the catalyst for these types of policies to be brought to the table because obviously, there is no portfolio director within Central Support Services, so that was a bit of a loophole in setting up the new Ministerial form of Government. Hopefully now this can be addressed, but as I said before, and it's not nice for me to have to stand up and say it, but to be able to put policies in place for such areas like Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, does come with a price tag, and at the moment the budget doesn't allow for a whole lot of scope for this. Hence, when we go through the whole review of the Labour Market Strategy, it's not just sitting, as I said in my opening piece with Education, it will need to be implemented and considered by Human Resources and the Economist so that we can look at how funding can be put into place to be able to cater for this. But it's going to be very, very difficult.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much.

Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker again I would like to thank the Honourable Chief Minister for her response, and again I recognise fully that this is not just a burden to the St Helena Government. This goes across all employers on the island. Just quoting from the Labour Market Strategy the last report that was actually published. "Inclusion needs to be normalised and requires medium to long-term strategies which involve a whole systems approach, we'll focus on this from April 2022". So what I would just like to ask the Chief Minister is, whilst this review of the Labour Market Strategy is being undertaken, will she make sure that consideration for disabled people in the workplace and inclusion of those disabled people is included within that review. Thank you Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

I can assure the Honourable Robert Midwinter that that is the case. Obviously for Education, I know you're not talking about Education, but we're talking about moving to an environment where education is inclusive of everyone. So if it's at the educational role, it needs to go all the way through to the whole of St Helena, not just as you said government, but the working spectrum across St Helena. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Councillor Thrower.

Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker will the Honourable Chief Minister, on page 17 of the original Labour Market Strategy document, it states the CASH Coordinator will have responsibility with the lead for liaising with employers across all sectors to identify positions specifically suitable for school leavers and individuals with disability. So that says it's not something that requires a huge amount of resources. It's not expensive to do at least that very minimal amount of work done by CASH.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I will ask Councillor sorry, Honourable Karl Thrower to just, I know you said page 17. I'm wondering if you're reading from the same document. What is the title of where you're looking?

Hon. Karl Thrower –

It's the Labour Market Strategy 2020-2025. This is the PDF that's on the government website, and it's under workforce development, roughly in the middle of the page, it starts "to maximise your benefit".

Hon. Chief Minister –

Yes, thank you. Because I've got the one that we're reviewing. Obviously it's slipped now because Education has put some in there. So I can tell you that we're looking in the area that you're talking about. Career Access St Helena has done quite a lot of communication with the different organisations. Hence we've set up the work experience portfolio as well as the apprenticeship policies as well, because they are working to identify positions specifically suitable to that. But it is becoming difficult as I said, because of the engagement from non-



government organisations. Indeed the government as well is limited because of accessibility at times, and with the private sector at the moment, trying to continue business in this economic climate is extremely difficult. So employment is an issue, if I can call it that, across the piece. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Minister Henry.

Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you for allowing me to contribute to this question Mr. Speaker, and I'm just going to bring this from a personal point of view, but my previous role, because it brings, it enlightens this particular topic. In my previous role we engaged with SHG and other elements to try and support people with disabilities etc., in a good environment in private business. However, that is very difficult for a private business simply because St Helena's infrastructure is the issue. St Helena's infrastructure is the issue across the board in a lot of this development. And I'm saying this because a lot of the questions that have been asked, and whether or not we should develop a full blown Labour Strategy without considering first of all, the infrastructure of the island. And I think that's why, it's not that this isn't important to this government, but this government sees that this is a particular issue that is hampering the strategy going forward. There is literally no proper infrastructure in most buildings to support people with this disability, and SHG and other organisations have tried to make small improvements, but that is what sits underneath moving this forward in a lot of cases. And I'm talking about physical disability, there's other elements of course. Just to add as well that this is also kept up from Safeguarding, and the Safeguarding Board is a multidisciplinary board that brings Education, Health etc. together, and we are currently broken down into smaller subgroups, and looking at disability and access to our environment is part of what our Safeguarding Board is doing as well. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. We will certainly look forward to the review being carried out. Councillor Thrower.

Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I just raised a point of information Mr. Speaker. Of course, we're currently in the Council Chamber which the Deputy Speaker still cannot access, despite the best efforts of the entire Council to get this fixed. So I think that says enough about the infrastructure on the island.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Next question please.

***Question No 3 - The Honourable Dr Corinda Essex to ask the Honourable Chief Minister***

The Speaker –

Honourable Dr Corinda Essex.

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Can the Honourable Chief Minister say what were the key outcomes of the St Helena Government pay and allowances review that was in progress in September 2021 to identify and address factors that lead to real and perceived inequities in compensation?



The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. As the Honourable Dr Corinda just said, the pay and allowance review was taken in September 2021. Since we have been in post since October 2021, this remains a key priority for us. However, it comes with funding, and we, at the moment as Honourable Dr Corinda Essex will know, we don't have the entire Portfolio of Government on the pay spine, if I can call it that. You've got teachers who are still on a teaching cadre. So each year we try and put funding towards being able to progress the pay and allowances review. The review has been completed, it's the funding now that is needed to implement that review. Again this year I can remember Ministers, whilst I was away in Montserrat, we have put some funding on one side for this particular implementation, or to commence the implementation. But we then had to take funds away again to be able to balance the budget, if I can put it that way, but what we've agreed will happen is that Teachers will be our first priority to be able to get them on the pay spine, so that the overall review then can be looked at holistically across government for all employees.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Essex.

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Can the Honourable Chief Minister say when it is hoped that, that change will be able to take place?

Hon. Chief Minister –

Yes, I can tell you that we're working on this. The Chief Secretary and I, as well as the Interim Director, now we did go out to meet with rather the chiefs after we met the teachers or representation of the teachers, and we also met with the PTAs, and we're planning to give them another update in July. Now that the budget is approved, work will be ongoing. We're hoping that that can be achieved in this financial year for the teaching cadre to come across. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Essex.

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

I thank the Chief Minister for her response. Can the Honourable Chief Minister state whether the pay allowances review covered all directorates?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

It does. There's some work that, I have to be honest, and I don't know the details of what has been done since we were given a presentation by the previous HR Manager. I probably haven't got the whole title here correctly, but as you know, our current HR Manager has been off island for quite some time, and she's just only recently returned to the island. Now that she's on the island, I know that this is an area that she will be focusing upon and I hope that they can give

us another update at Cabinet level, so that we understand specifically how the Teaching Cadre can be pulled across. But I know that they are looking across the piece. There is some work undertaken also to be able to look at pilot projects, etc., and that's been quite positive, I think to be quoted on is across the whole of government, just to be clear on that. But there have to be also reviews of job descriptions etc., as well to ensure that what people are doing is per the job descriptions and they haven't taken on additional roles that the job descriptions haven't matched up to. So it's a whole review of even the job roles and responsibilities.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Essex.

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Can the Honourable Chief Minister state whether in fact, since several years of elapsed since the review was completed, its recommendations are still current and fit for purpose?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

I think it is, as he said, we will look at it coming back, and because the trajectory is to move towards the JMC, 60% of salaries in the UK. However, I do know that that was based on 2019 but with funding being an issue, if we can't even reach what was the salaries in the UK in 2019, reaching the salaries that are in the UK in 2024 is going to be another uphill struggle, but at least it's the trajectory there to improve the pay and grading for St Helena. It may well need a review, I'm not suggesting it isn't, but we haven't even achieved what we said we were going to achieve in respect of the 2019 60%.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. I'll allow one more question. Councillor Thrower.

Hon. Karl Thrower –

Under the section reviewing compensation in the original document, there is a paragraph towards the end that says the work proposed to address concerns around compensation is complex and will necessarily be a lengthy process. However, recognising that compensation is not the only factor that contributes to job satisfaction, near-term efforts will also be made to identify best practices in non-financial rewards and recognition, e.g., recognition of long service and or retirement was noted frequently in consultation and more consistently implemented across SHG. Has any work been done on that so these are basically benefits that people could receive that are not linked to any kind of financial changes?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

Yes, some work has been done on that, and I know Central Support has been very keen, even to recognise years of service. And we had hoped actually that there would be some sort of financial reward attached to it. Unfortunately that hasn't been achieved because of all the reasons I've just talked about regarding financing. But we do still try to recognise people's service in this climate. If I'm honest recognition is good, and valuing our people is important,



but most people look to that as a monetary reward, and we're not in a position at this time unfortunately to be able to do that. But I know it's not true the lack of trying from Central Support putting forward those business cases. It's just that we are trying to balance the priorities with the priorities.

The Speaker –

Thank you. Next question, please.

***Question No. 4 - The Honourable Ronald Coleman to ask the Honourable Chief Minister***

The Speaker –

The Honourable Ronald Coleman.

Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Can the Honourable Chief Minister say what is considered to be the complimentary policies that are not directly related to employment but substantially impact St Helena's ability to deliver the vision of this Labour Market Strategy?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Hon Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I think this is something that we can say we've done as a government because even though the Labour Market Strategy is somewhat outdated, I'll say that for reasons that will come up throughout the day. When this was written, it was pre-COVID. It was pre the war in Ukraine and all the happenings that are going on internationally right now that are impacting all countries. But when we came in we decided as a government, to focus on the effective infrastructure. Minister Henry mentioned before the need to look at effective infrastructure. So we've looked at long-term shipping access, we're in the midst now of doing the same with air access to ensure that we've got a reliable air service. We're pushing forward with renewable energy, may not be as quickly as people would wish, but again, it's about the resources both financial and human, to be able to deliver in the time scale set. We are looking at banking because expanding and improving banking services is key to being able to build an economy here in St Helena. Education as we all know, the review for education is happening this year. It should have started last year but because of staffing issues it's been delayed, but I can tell you it is on the go now. These two reviews are actually under that so one which will be implemented as of September this year, more to address the primary schools, because of the limitations we have there with access to teachers and the very low numbers. And then the larger review, we are hoping that we can complete that for implementation, or staggered implementation from September 2025. Health, I don't think anybody can say that this government hasn't provided or tried to provide as much of the pie of our funding towards health. Is it adequate? We'd say no, but it's all that we can do when we have to provide other core services, but to be able to improve upon the way in which we provide funding to health, we are looking to improve standards of healthcare. So along with the educational review to look at standards, a similar one is happening within health, housing. I guess this work being done is not sufficient, and for some they'll say it's not adequate, but again when you're trying to balance the budget and trying to put priorities over the priorities. We are still looking at housing. The biggest check in our box for this government is the immigration. We have now implemented a new immigration policy, and with the support of AG's Chambers, we're hoping that the immigration legislation will be in place for September this year. We're always looking



at investment, but I think it's fair to say that without effective infrastructure, it's going to be difficult to encourage investors, but also to retain our own people here so that for us the key priority is ensuring that we have effective infrastructure. The pressure stabilises the cost of living for individuals, businesses, and the whole of St Helena. On top of that, we've got the St Helena Research Institute that's been up and running, and we are growing our database so that we can collect data, some really good data is on St Helena, but not always in a central based place. So now the St Helena Research Institute will do that so that it will be accessible to people in St Helena and the wider diaspora. So that is something that's worked well for us. Social policies, providing adequate support for families, for children, and creating an environment where it is financially viable for children to remain in school until the age of 18. All that is part of the review that we'll be doing on social policy. I think we all know we've only got one Social Policy Planner, and she is in high demand with pretty much all the policies that we implement. So having support for the one part and I think would be seen as a key priority. Also tax policies we've been talking about them for a while, and I know that Minister Brooks and his portfolio will be looking at that during this year, and I know that work has started in the area of technology, well the fiber optic cable is here on St Helena, and we have rolled out for the first time ever, unlimited access to the internet. Yes there's still room for improvement, yes SHG and the wider sectors priority's there to education and health. There are still improvements that can be made, but we are moving in the right direction when it comes to technology. So with regards to what are the complementary policies, those are the areas that we have been focusing on Honorable Ronald Coleman. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Who would have thought you only heard the question an hour before we started. Thank you very much. Councillor Coleman.

Hon. Ronald Coleman –

Just to thank the Chief Minister for her answer. Thank you Sir.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Minister Brooks.

Hon. Mark Brooks –

Oh yeah. Thank you Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to add to that long list of policies and strategies that the Chief Minister just read out, there's probably one that also needs mentioning and that is the SEDP, which has now been reviewed and updated to the FCDO, which also recognise the changes that has happened over that time, including the landing of the cable and the benefits that we would like to achieve around that so just to add that one in also. Mr. Speaker thank you very much.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much Honorable Minister Brooks. Councillor Midwinter.

Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker just as the Chief Minister made reference in terms of complimentary policies regarding the Immigration Policy, nearly two months ago when we were questioning the Immigration Policy, this was placed on the Labour Market Strategy, so it's good to know that the review is going ahead. However, in relation to what's available to the public at the moment, only the year-end progress report 2021 is the most up-to-date information

available. So will the Chief Minister give an assurance that moving forward, more regular updates will be provided to the public in terms of the Labour Market Strategy?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

That is indeed the case. As I said previously, we are doing an internal review. Right now Education has taken the lead. It now needs to be shared with economists, HR, and the statistician. It will then have to be, obviously shared within the wider government. And as soon as we've got some input there with some teeth, if I can put it that way, as to the things that we'd need to do as a government, we will be doing wider consultation, because it's important everybody knows the trajectory we're heading. We're just not there at the moment. I would like to add though, that the priority for September noting that there are only two months until then, was to align the Labour Market Strategy with the Immigration legislation. So that is key. It's just that, as the review is being done, obviously we can see that although the sentiments are right, it's out of date. The Census being referred to as 2016, we need to update those types of things for instance, to make sure that the groundwork and the foundation work is speaking about all the updated stuff so that everybody can work off something that's more updated. Because, for instance, the Labour Market Strategy still talks of permanent residence. For instance we can't talk about that anymore, because we are now moving to permission to 'stay in work permit' the St Helena stages. There have been no changes, but we need to make sure now that everything that is said in the Labour Market Strategy is in the right categories for how we move education forward, but also employment in its entirety.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. So first I'll have Councillor Essex.

Hon. Dr Corinda Essex –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. When updating the Labour Market Strategy, will the Chief Minister give an assurance that the importance of the Labour Market Strategy, actually as evidence if you like, that the Ministers are achieving their vision of not leaving anyone behind is maintained because one of the main rationales for the provisional Labour Market Strategy was to ensure that no one was left behind, and that is fully in line with your Ministerial vision?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

I can assure the Honourable Dr, Corinda Essex that's the case of the Labour Market Strategy vision. Mike Wallace talked about not leaving noone behind. Our Ministerial vision is a better quality of life for all, so we will continue to push that we don't leave anyone behind. It might not mean that everybody will be on a level playing field if they see it that way, but the opportunity for everybody to access the Labour Market Strategy will be there.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Midwinter, is your question related to what was just been said?

Hon. Robert Midwinter –



Yes Mr. Speaker, just again in response to the Chief Minister and saying that they will be updating, just to bring to attention, according to the previous progress report, the situation regarding equalisation of medical arrangements was already done by the previous government. So yes, there are clearly things that are wrong there. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker –

Thank you very much. Next question please.

***Question No. 5 - The Honourable Gillian Brooks to ask the Honourable Chief Minister***

The Speaker –

The Honorable Gillian Brooks.

Hon. Gillian Brooks –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Can the Honourable Chief Minister tell this Council what progress has been made towards progressing the draft for succession policy and associated plans for key positions now that the Covid pandemic is behind us?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

I thank the Honourable Gillian Brooks for her question. The Covid pandemic may well be behind us but recovery is slow. I think what Covid has shown us, not just for St Helena but for everybody, if you speak to all the other Overseas Territories and even the UK, the way in which people wish to be employed now is different. We talked before about our trajectory to the 60% of the JMC being dated 2019, salaries have increased substantially across the world, and smaller states like ourselves are struggling to be able to employ quality people, qualified people, etc., across the piece. So I'm not just talking about Health, I'm talking about Education, and we all know what's happened recently, even within the Environment. The Environment, Natural Resources and Planning are trying to get specialist services within their portfolio as well. So although Covid is underway, the success of the succession policy, even if updated, doesn't mean that we are ready to, unfortunately be able to deal with succession. We do it where we can, but it is about people being available to us who's interested in those managerial positions. Timely enough, as we stand here today, this afternoon, on the In-scope program that I've recorded, we are talking about the TC program and how a lot of the TC program is now following line posts and not being utilised for its initial intended purposes, because the need for line posts are still a growing concern for St Helena. So I'm not suggesting that we won't be looking at the succession policy, but the implementation of it at the moment, based on the place that St Helena is at, it's really difficult to focus on succession when we're trying our utmost to fill line posts on a regular basis.

The Speaker –

Councillor Brooks.

Hon. Gillian Brooks –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Thank you Chief Minister. And I do understand the problem we have not just here but worldwide, around filling posts, filling positions. Can I just ask then, what works? To what extent was work done or has been done with the Workforce Planning report.



Has anything been developed on that, that is mentioned in the session around building the economy for tomorrow?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this is exactly the thing that. I'm talking about, why the review needs to be done to ensure that things that were talked about are being done. Are they being implemented, if not there are valid reasons. As I said I think the overarching one is the capacity and capability of St Helena, and the more we lose our working age population, the greater the concern will grow. Hence Immigration Policy, the review of that and the change needed to try and make St Helena more attractive has been done. We also looking at one of the things that I know HR is looking at now, which I know will be music to Honourable Dr. Corinda Essex, is and probably more as well, but looking at how we can utilise the TC program to see how we can try and attract our St Helenians back to St Helena. With that said however, it may not be the full remuneration package like it's talked about in the Labour Market Strategy, because the climate has changed since this was written in 2019, but I know that those are areas and trying to target our marketing and advertising so that, as many St Helenians know about the opportunities there and understand. Because in this Labour Market Strategy, even though it comes up in a lot of Constituency meetings, there is access to returning Saints to be able to be employed under the TC program. That's always been the case, but the understanding of such is sometimes missing on St Helena, because of some of the things that come through. So all I'd say to you Honourable Gillian Brooks, is the draft succession policy may need to be looked at, but unfortunately due to the climate in St Helena with trying to retain people in post for the time that we would need and with the skill sets, it is succession is becoming even more difficult to focus on. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Brooks.

Hon. Gillian Brooks –

No, I just want to say thank you Chief Minister.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Councillor Midwinter.

Hon. Robert Midwinter –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. As the Chief Minister has just confirmed that succession planning is still considered of significant importance when recruiting TC staff to fill key positions, can she confirm that in particular, the identification and training of local counterparts is an ongoing requirement of TC Terms of Reference?

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honourable Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Speaker –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I believe it is, or whether it's actually being done, I can't tell you it's been done in all areas. And as I said, sometimes they're coming to follow the line post. So there's nobody really there who's interested to fill, to do the succession planning in the first

instance. So we are in a very different position to when the Labour Market Strategy 2020, was actually written to be implemented.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Next question please.

*Question No. 6 - The Honourable Karl Thrower to ask the Honourable Chief Minister*

The Speaker –

The Honorable Karl Thrower.

Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Could the Chief Minister inform this house how important the government considers the document, Labour Market Strategy 2020 to 2035, when making policy decisions and implementing the Minister's Vision?

The Speaker –

Thank you. Honorable Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Well we did as I said before, probably not the priorities placed on the areas of priorities in the document in its entirety, but because of the complementary policies, effective infrastructure became the highest priority for this government. That is all talked about as under complementary policies. So yes it did, and as the Honourable Dr Corinda Essex alluded to before, about not leaving anyone behind, our Minister's vision is a better quality of life for all. So it might be worded slightly differently. There needs to be a review, but most definitely the Labour Market Strategy I think that needs to also be said. If you look through this document, it talks about the declining population being a real concern two, or three decades ago. So what we are experiencing now, I probably won't find it because I'm standing here on the spot. It's probably going to be the last page now, but if we look on the page, maybe 12/13 I'll say, just because there are some amendments in my document now, and we look at the situational analysis that showed that if a net outward migration after scale were to occur indefinitely into the future, there could be fewer than 1500 residents on St Helena by 2050 as reflected in that situational analysis I refer to and with mathematical skill coming into it. If we look at where we would be by 2024 it wasn't far wrong, because it shows about 4000 people. Hence for us, immigration was a key policy that we wanted to see implemented to demonstrate that we are serious about turning the growth of St Helena around because that's the only way we can build an economy.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Honorable Karl Thrower.

Hon. Karl Thrower –

Thank you very much. Clearly the document is a key document for the St Helena Government. Clearly it's a key document for the entire island. So what steps are going to be taken when the review is finished, so it's not allowed to fall by the wayside like it has been this time.

The Speaker –

Okay. Thank you very much. Chief Minister.



Hon. Chief Minister –

I'm happy for Minister Henry to jump in on this as well. I'll allow him afterward. I would not say that is all and behind because nobody wants to do anything, the state of affairs in St Helena and internationally, has changed drastically since 2020 whether it be because of the COVID pandemic, or is it before all the unrest in the world with Ukraine, Russia, etc., and now what's happening elsewhere in the world as well, Gaza, etc., that has led to the inability of this government, and dare I say the previous government or even the government to come. It's not easy when you're trying to continue to provide services that are for St Helena and then finding flexibility within our budget to implement some of these wider things. But it is a priority, and it needs to be a priority, because if we don't retain and increase our population, then St Helena is going to really struggle to ever become economically a better place. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Minister Henry.

Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you Mr. Speaker and thank the Honorable Member for his question. My follow-up is just based on what we experienced, I think as a team, which is that you walk through the door there's about 100 policies to change. If you walk around and you try doing all you're going to find, you're wasting a hell of a lot of time because you're going to find one affects the other. So you're going to continuously change. I think what we did, is this government saw the Labour Market Strategy, we know how important labour is. I am so glad the Chief Minister has just picked up the bit about immigration, because you get the feeling that the two years we've been here, it's you know, it's become an issue, but it's been an issue for a long time. It's just starting to snowball that's the reality. But we've picked up from an infrastructure perspective. We've looked at immigration as a key driver and tagged on. These are the policies that need to fall in line to improve the overall objective. We could have started with the Labour Market Strategy and then tied immigration on as something that needs to improve as the overall objective. You have to start some ways. It's not that it's not an important document, but you cannot update the whole lot simultaneously without learning first, what works, and what doesn't go out. So it's just an operational thing I think more than anything that we're facing, but not updating the daily model strategy. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Minister Ellick.

Hon. Jeffery Ellick –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I just want to also come on behalf there, because my Honourable friend asked about when making decisions, the government considers this as an important document. Yes, it was considered an important document, and I dealt with the Immigration Policy. So I read the Labour Market Strategy first before I dealt with the Immigration Policy. What was clear to me from the Labour Market Strategy was the declining population, but also the ethical parts of the policy, which is creating a path to permanent residents, which goes against our Constitution. So the Chief Minister has assured me that that will be taken out. So it is important to us, just probably for some people not done around their way, but this is the way how we are dealing with it at the moment. And just to say, in terms of immigration, this has helped us quite a lot in moving immigration forward. And just to give you a point of information, the Immigration Policy's with the Attorney General's Chambers. We have already set everything up for him to make the work go ahead, and they have engaged the Legal Drafter who's now working on drafting the legislation. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much. Any further questions.

Hon. Karl Thrower –

So what I'm actually referring to before I ask a question is the fact that there are two six monthly progress reports that were clearly supposed to be done six monthly. The Labour Market Strategy was titled 2020 to 2035, which is extremely ambitious. So now we're looking at completely reviewing it in 2024. If the updates had been done, then we wouldn't be reviewing it, because it would have been a living document, which if you probably checked it, was probably referred to at the time. So the question is simply, how do we ensure that the new one, once we spend all the time and effort reviewing it, doesn't get out of date so quickly, maybe by carrying on the six-month review, but this time ensuring that the public service carries out the six-month review?

The Speaker –

Moving forward, okay, thank you very much. Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister –

I think this comes right back to what I've just been saying before, and that is resources and the lack of capacity. Also when I looked at this document, even though they were measured, measuring success was one of the titles, there were no timelines or deadlines put to them. So that would be something I'd see as being necessary to make it measurable. Because if not, you can just say it's going to be done, but it doesn't say it's going to be achieved in 2030 or in 2028. I am grateful actually, even though I didn't know it was going to happen this way, that we probably didn't review it earlier, because of the trajectory that's happened now, because of all the other things I've just mentioned before, that's put St Helena in a totally different perspective to where it was in 2020. So now I think is a good time to look at it. We also have a new form of government now, so that wouldn't have been in place when this was first put together. So we need to look at how that needs to be changed so that we have proper reporting lines, as well as who takes this. Because believe it or not, when I was asked to look at the Labour Market Strategy, I can tell you, that Education is still questioning, is it under Education, Employment and Skills who need to be responsible for the Labour Market Strategy. Because when you look at, yes they will need to do some implementation to support it, but it seems very much an economic document if I'm quite honest with you. So I might be trying to push this over to my Honourable Friend Minister Brooks to look after. But that will all come out in the review, because we will need, as I said before input from different parts of government, but we will continue with it as it is at the moment, because if it doesn't sit with Minister Brooks, I'm sure it comes bouncing back to me under Central Support Services. So whichever way it goes, we just know that it needs to be reviewed and updated, and it needs to be fully consulted so the whole of St Helena understands the trajectory that we'd like the Labour Market Strategy to go. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker –

Thank you very much.

Hon. Karl Thrower –

One more question, more of a point of information. Okay, the information the Chief Minister saying is missing is actually in the updated reports. So it says has comments, but delayed due to the impact on HR functions, particularly medical resources and the impact projected (2020)



Q3 21 22 and there are pages of information. That's what the update reports were for. This is where all the timelines were not only predicted but they were monitored. That's why the six-month reviews are so important.

The Speaker –

Okay, thank you very much. Okay, I'll allow just one more. Thank you, Minister Henry.

Hon. Martin Henry –

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Just as part of a point of information, I don't think it's from my perspective as well, and I agree that we should have scheduled reviews of our policy. So I don't think we are saying no, that isn't the case. I don't agree that we do it every six months, however, given how things change. But there also, there is necessary part like the Chief Minister has just mentioned, there have been major things that have happened that have made this policy, this particular document in my opinion, outdated to the point that it needs a full review. So you also have to bear that in mind, because continuously updating, sometimes just then creates what I consider to be a spider web of things going all over the place. So you have to retract and bring that review back to a properly updated document again. So I agree with what you're trying to put it over Councillor, however I think there are issues by trying to achieve that. Thank you.

The Speaker –

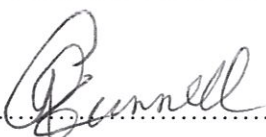
Okay, thank you very much. What a very important discussion this was, a difficult discussion, but how important. Good luck Chief Minister, a review of the Labour Market Strategy is needed. What I'm very happy about is that we removed the limitation on Councillors in respect of the number of supplementary questions they could ask, but it also meant that we could allow Ministers to help with questions, help provide the answers. I think that was a jolly good thing to have done. But that then does brings us to the end of it all, and we are on time. So Members that concludes the Minister's Question Time for June. Thank you all very much for your contributions. Thank you also to those in the public who took the opportunity to listen via the radio. We hope that you found the questions by Councillors, and answers given by Ministers were interesting and informative, and hopefully some of the questions you wanted answers to were among those asked and responded, and that now you are very much better informed. In closing, may I also thank Anita Legg for being our Clerk for today; she stepped in when another Clerk was not able to be here today, and the Honourable Acting Attorney General, can I just ask could you just say who you are?

Acting Attorney General –

My name is Simon Dykes. I'm currently Acting Attorney General, whilst the substantive Attorney General is off taking leave.

The Speaker –

Okay. Well, thank you very much for today. And in closing I would also like to thank SAMS for broadcasting these live proceedings, all being well they will be rebroadcast. I think the public will be waiting to hear the rebroadcast. Thank you all very much. Have a pleasant day ahead.

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Chairperson

27/5/25

