



St Helena  
Government



## **THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE AND SELECT (SCRUTINY) COMMITTEES**

**A General Election will be held on Wednesday 3 September 2025, if more than 12 valid nominations are received by no later than 12 noon on Nomination Day, Wednesday, 20 August 2025. This year's Election will be the second under a ministerial system of Government.**

**Leading up to the General Election we have been providing information articles on how a Ministerial Government works.**

**In our final article this week we focus on the role of the Public Accounts Committee and Select (Scrutiny) Committees.**

### **What is the Public Accounts Committee?**

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is established under section 69 of the Constitution.

The PAC reports to Legislative Council. It must examine the annual statement of accounts of the Government of St Helena as audited by the Chief Auditor. It also considers such management letters and reports of the Chief Auditor as laid before Legislative Council or brought to the attention of the Council by the Chief Auditor. The Committee can also carry out other functions prescribed in law.

The Public Accounts Committee in accordance with the Constitution is independent and not subject to direction or control by any other person or body. Its functions and composition (including both Elected Members and non-Elected Members as detailed below) enhance the political accountability of Government.

In carrying out its functions the Committee scrutinises how the Government and other public bodies spend money, it helps ensure good standards of fiscal management and accountability. It also considers compliance with relevant Ordinances and financial reporting standards.

The PAC has power, subject to other laws, to summon individuals before it and to require answers to questions.

Formal meetings of the PAC are guided by Standing Orders and the Public Accounts Committee (Procedure) Ordinance 2019.

### **What is the membership of the PAC?**

Legislative Council will elect by majority vote three Councillors (who are not Ministers) to the PAC and the Governor, in consultation with Legislative Council, appoints two independent members of the public, one of whom must take on the role as the Chairperson.

Pursuant to the Constitution, the Chief Auditor acts as Adviser to the PAC.

### **How often does the PAC meet?**

The PAC meet as a group at least once a month and public meetings of the PAC are held at least four times in a year.

### **What are Select (Scrutiny) Committees?**

The amendment to the St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha Constitution Order 2009 in 2021, provides for the establishment of at least two Select Committees. Part of the remit of the seven Elected Members of Legislative Council who are not Ministers is to examine and scrutinise the performance of sectors of government through these Select Committees. This includes scrutinising the decision making of Ministers, thus contributing to ensuring the effective use of public funds. The Committees are referred to as Select Committee 1 and Select Committee 2.

Following the introduction of the new Ministerial form of Government in October 2021, the Select Committee (Establishment) Order, 2022 (“the Order”) established Select Committees. Two Select Committees have been set up and the Councillors who are not Ministers are the members of these committees, with Select Committee 1 comprising four Elected Members and Select Committee 2 comprising three Elected Members. Ministers cannot be part of a Select Committee.

The Order allows Elected Members to elect, at a formal meeting of the Legislative Council, the Chair and members of the Select Committees from amongst the Elected Members who are not Ministers. An Elected Member who is not a Minister would only be on one Select Committee. The Governor receives the names of the Elected Members to be on each Select Committee from the Clerk to the Legislative Council, and issues a letter of appointment to each member.

Select Committees will meet on a regular basis and are responsible for after-the-fact review and scrutiny of decisions and activities of the Government. Generally, meetings will be held in public unless the matter being discussed is confidential. Public officers must attend Select Committee meetings to give evidence if called upon to do so.

**In our final issue next week we will look at the role of the St Helena Public Service. These Information Releases are also available online at:**

**<https://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/government/public-information/elections/>**

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