



St Helena
Government

THE ROLE OF THE ST HELENA PUBLIC SERVICE



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 continue to provide information articles on how a Ministerial Government works.

This week's focus is on the role of the St Helena Public Service.

What is the Public Service?

The Public Service comprises the Treasury, a Central Support Service and five portfolios:

- Health & Social Care
- Education, Skills & Employment
- Environment, Natural Resources & Planning
- Safety, Security & Home Affairs
- Economic Development.

The Chief Secretary is the head of the Public Service and is supported by senior officials including the Financial Secretary, the Deputy Chief Secretary, the Deputy Financial Secretary and Portfolio Directors who together form the Public Service Senior Leadership Team.

The primary purpose of the Public Service is to serve the Executive Authority vested in the Governor, the Chief Ministers and Ministers, by providing non-partisan advice, developing and implementing policies, and delivering essential public services.

What are the roles and responsibilities of the Public Service?

The Chief Secretary has overall responsibility for the management of the Public Service (including recruitment, structure, and risk and performance management) and is the senior policy adviser to the Governor and the Chief Minister. The Financial Secretary is the principal financial adviser to the St Helena Government and adviser to the Minister with responsibility for finance.

Portfolio Directors are responsible for the operational management of their Portfolio. This includes management of their delegated budget and allocation of resources, including staff, to the various services within their Portfolio. They are also responsible for the implementation of strategy, policy and legislation and are the primary policy advisers to the Minister responsible for their Portfolio.

What is the difference in roles between Ministers and Portfolio Directors?

Ministers exercise general direction and have policy control within their Portfolios. The Portfolio Directors are responsible for the day-to-day management and operations of their Portfolios.

How do Ministers work with the Public Service to set the strategic direction?

At the beginning of their term of office, Ministers, led by their Chief Minister, will agree their policy agenda and their priorities within that agenda. This is then incorporated into a Strategic Outcome Framework. This is a holistic, strategically led, long-term framework used to inform short-, medium- and long-term planning, development, investment, prioritization, and decision-making by Ministers at the Portfolio level.

The Public Service develops policy/strategies, objectives/targets and performance indicators, based on policy priorities agreed by Executive Council. Ministers will provide input during the development of these and will communicate progress to the people of St Helena.

Ministers approve policy/strategies which are relevant to a particular Portfolio, whilst Executive Council approves policy/strategies which are broader or have a national impact.

What relationship do Ministers have with Portfolio Directors?

The significance of a trusting, confident relationship between Ministers and their senior officials is vital to effective policy design and delivery of government business. It is expected that following their appointments, Ministers will hold structured discussions with their Portfolio Directors to establish clear and mutual understanding of priorities and ways of working. Ministers will ideally be based within their relevant Portfolio and work closely with their Portfolio Director. Both the Minister and the Portfolio Director will be supported on a daily basis by a Portfolio Assistant. Portfolio Directors are answerable to Ministers but are not directly managed by them, the Chief Secretary has line management responsibility for all Portfolio Directors.

It is not expected for Elected Members or senior officials to agree on everything, but leadership requires consensus to achieve and then teamwork to deliver the agreed objectives. The commitment to respecting the principles of democracy and the rule of the majority is clearly set out in the preamble to the 2009 Constitution of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha.

These Information Releases are also available online at:

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

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July 2025