

Constituency Meeting

Half Tree Hollow Community Centre

Monday – 20 October 2025 at 7:30 pm



Date: Monday 20 October 2025

Venue: HTH Community Centre

Chair: Cllr Derek Thomas

Secretary: Marita Bagley

Attendance: Chief Minister, Minister Turner, Minister Henry, Minister Brooks, Cllr Leo, Cllr Essex, Cllr Thomas, Cllr Midwinter, Cllr Beard and 28 members of the public.

Apologies: Minister Thrower (overseas on business); Cllr Ronald Coleman (absent).

Opening Remarks

Cllr Derek Thomas welcomed everyone, noting this was the first council meeting under the new administration. He expressed optimism about progress under the new government and the importance of community participation. The meeting was recorded for transparency, with minutes to be kept by Marita.

The Chair invited attendees to raise concerns freely, encouraging open discussion in an orderly fashion.

1. Fisheries

The meeting began with public concern about the state of the fisheries industry and whether services are being delivered. Residents expressed frustration that fish remained scarce and expensive despite St Helena being surrounded by water.

The Chief Minister advised that SHG is fully committed to revitalising fisheries by ensuring fish are available for local markets and supporting both inshore and offshore operations. The government remains fully committed to revitalizing the fisheries sector. Efforts are underway to improve productivity, processing, and export markets.

Concerns were voiced about how data is collected, and there being too many restrictions on catches, effecting the Islands culture. It was recommended to have a closed season rather than the restrictions. Members acknowledged that local fishermen and data collection methods needed review to ensure sustainable quotas and the need for reliable scientific data.

Action:

- Minister Thrower to provide a full update on fisheries and related scientific studies upon his return.
- Review of data collection and quota-setting practices to be discussed in the Fisheries Committee.

2. Rupert's Port Operations and Costs

Concerns were raised about high operating costs at the new Rupert's Port, including container handling, cargo fees, and the use of port facilities. Examples were cited of sharply increased costs since the port's opening, which will have a knock on effect and risked raising prices for customers.

There was also discussion about logistical inefficiencies—communication breakdowns between customs, consolidators, and users causing delays. It was emphasised the need for better coordination and clear decision-making at the port.

Another small business experienced a charge of £125.00 per container from Solomon's, but do not know what the charge is for. They have also been advised that the freezer boxes will be going up, and would like clarity on what that is for as well.

There was disappointment that no solar options had been incorporated into the design to run all or at least some of the equipment.

Minister Brooks acknowledged all concerns, she took questions to address and will feedback. Cllr Essex confirmed she had written to the Portfolio and Parties requesting a waive on charges, particularly for the first vessel call, although SHG waived their charges, she had not yet received a response from other parties.

It was queried if 50,000 to 60,000 per quarter is the true value that can be expected for utility costs for the port, however this could not be verified, and it was pointed out that although it is early days to know what the operating cost will be, an estimated value could be based on this last month as this would also inform future budget forecasting.

Actions:

- Minister Brooks to follow up with the Portfolio Director and Solomon's regarding port charges and communication improvements.
- Minister Brooks to provide an estimated value of operating cost to date.
- Councillors to push for early financial estimates to ensure adequate budget allocation for Port Operations.

3. Sewage Systems and Road Conditions

Residents raised issues with delayed access to sewage connections for new homes. It was pointed out to constituents that this is in the Economic Development Investment Program pipeline and at the last constituent meeting the timeline given was 2 years.

Poor road conditions in certain areas are still a concern and some requests for road safety barriers were also made. The Chair undertook to personally visit affected areas and follow up with the Roads.

Action:

- Chair to inspect affected roads and liaise with Roads for remedial action.

4. Policing and Drink-Driving Enforcement

A strong discussion followed regarding the community's concerns over police conduct following the new drink-driving enforcement.

Many felt policing had become "heavy-handed," with officers conducting roadside tyre checks at night and causing fear among law-abiding citizens. It was argued that enforcement methods were damaging community trust and local business, as residents were afraid to socialise.

The Chief Minister and Minister Brooks confirmed that complaints had been received and were already being raised with the Chief of Police. It was clarified that the police operate under the Governor, but Councillors have scheduled a meeting with the Chief of Police for Wednesday, where these issues will be raised.

Cllr Derek Thomas stated that as Police & Crime Panel representative, he would raise the issue formally on 14 November.

Actions:

- Councillors to present public concerns to the Chief of Police.

5. Workforce Development, TC Posts, and Constitution

Discussion moved on to frustration over ongoing reliance on Technical Cooperation (TC) posts. Several members and residents indicated that qualified Saints were being overlooked for roles, while expatriates were still recruited and better supported.

Members agreed that Human Resources (HR) and Procurement remained two of the most vulnerable areas in government. Although there is need for stronger accountability and local career progression, it was explained that constitutional limitations meant ministers had little direct control over public service appointments, as this fell under the Chief Secretary and ultimately the Governor. Nonetheless, it was confirmed that constitutional reform and relocation packages for returning Saints would remain a government priority.

Actions:

- HR reform and greater local hiring oversight to be considered by the new Head of Public Service on arrival in November.
- Public engagement with new Head of Public Service to be arranged.

6. Youth Development and Facilities

A young resident proposed establishing a youth centre for those aged over 16, citing a gap in provision once young people leave New Horizons. Councillors supported the idea and recommended that he speak with Scott Crowie who was looking into expanding and also with Nikita Crowie who is Head of Properties for SHG.

7. Income Related Benefits and Community Work

Concerns were expressed about the fairness and effectiveness of the benefits system, with attention drawn to payment allocations, unemployment, and the need for more community work programmes. Participants also highlighted that there are residents who has applied for benefits without success whilst some benefit recipients appear capable of employment.

Cllr Thomas said he will continue to push for recipients under 65 without medical exemptions should be required to undertake part-time community work. Members acknowledged the need to review this policy and its effect on community morale.

Action:

- Council to review benefits criteria policy and community work initiatives.

8. Telecommunications and Internet Quality

Residents complained about poor internet speeds despite the new fibre optic link.

It was pointed out that Government was in the midst of some interesting negotiations with the current provider.

Councillors also explained that legacy Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL) infrastructure remains a bottleneck, especially in HTH and St Paul's, where usage is so much more data than the system is designed for. So until there are some upgrades to that network that will continue to be an issue.

9. Apprenticeships, Skills, and Education

Several attendees raised concerns about the limited range of vocational training and apprenticeships available on-island. Councillors agreed on the importance of expanding trades education and supporting youth employment.

Ministers reported that apprenticeship and graduate schemes are developing, though still small in number. The need to align training with local industries such as fishing, agriculture, and construction was highlighted.

Actions:

- It was agreed to explore expanded apprenticeships and practical trade qualifications and collaboration between private sector and secondary school to be encouraged.

10. Other Issues Discussed included:

- Disabled Parking, Taxi Ranks and Parking in general.
- One Web Ground Station
- Emergency Alarm removed from the Arch
- Usage of Ruperts Beach Area during operations
- Port Security being hired from Nepal
- Cost of Fruit vs Healthy Eating
- Growing more of what we eat
- Usage of SHG vehicles for personal use
- Population Decline

Closing Summary

Cllr Thomas thanked everyone for attending and for their contributions. It was agreed that feedback from this meeting would be shared publicly, and updates provided at the next constituency session.

Meeting closed: 10:15pm