EXCO meeting of 24 July 2012

Good afternoon,

I began our meeting today by bringing Councillors up to date with news of our colleague Paul Blessington, Financial Secretary, who left for Cape Town onboard the Basil Read ship on 12 July to seek urgent medical attention. High seas had caused a prolonged and uncomfortable crossing to Walvis Bay. Paul finally went ashore yesterday, just in time to catch the flight to Cape Town. He is now in hospital there and undergoing tests. We all send our best wishes to Paul for a speedy recovery.

Our agenda started with updates from officials on three matters. Dr Essex, Director of Corporate Procurement, briefed Councillors on progress with spending of EU funds provided under EDF 9 and EDF 10. Dr Essex advised that EDF 9 funds were fully allocated and secured, while the first tranche of EDF 10 funding is due for disbursement at the end of this month as all trigger indicators have been met.

We then heard from Mrs Carol George, Director of Health and Social Welfare about how the new arrangements were working to provide access to health care for residents of Sandy Bay. The Directorate had been monitoring progress and concluded that overall the new system was working quite well. But consideration was being given to how the measures might be improved in response to feedback from those using the new service. One area being looked at was how to allow for some flexibility in the bus route so that the bus could stop closer to a certain area of Sandy Bay to reduce the walk to the bus stop at Milestone. A full review of the new arrangements would be completed, after being in place for three months, at the end of August.

The next update was from David Thompson, the Director of Infrastructure and Utilities, who briefed us on preparations to divest the Energy and Water Divisions to a new company, yet to be formed. A target date had been set to achieve this by 1 October 2012. However, EXCO took the view that more time would be needed to manage this major piece of work, noting that the transition to the proposed new structure would require legislation and a new regulatory framework. Furthermore, EXCO attached importance to ensuring that the divestment and its impact are properly communicated to the general public. EXCO directed that the work towards divestment should continue but in slower time than the current 1 October target date.

Our next agenda item was a paper on the Definition of Disability which we agreed to defer to our next meeting.

We then considered a paper presented by the Attorney General which sought approval to endorse the principle of revising laws electronically rather than in paper form and the streamlining of the process for authorising each revised item. Essentially, this would allow amendments to Ordinances to be applied and brought in to force more quickly, while being easily accessible via the SHG website. The proposal was readily endorsed by Councillors.

The next paper recommended an amendment to the Employment Rights Ordinance 2010. The amendment seeks to adjust the Ordinance to allow for appeals of decisions by the Labour Regulating Authority to be referred to the Supreme Court. This became necessary when it was decided to appoint the Chief Magistrate to the position of Labour Regulating Authority. Councillors were content to support the recommendation.

The last formal item on our agenda was to review the undertakings given and the resolutions made at the meetings of LEGCO on 22 March and 6 July. We noted that a progress report was being prepared which we would review when ready.

Under ‘Any Other Business’ I mentioned that we had received revised plans for the design of the airport terminal and that it was for Governor in Council to approve the design. EXCO directed that the new design should be made available for public viewing and that the LDCB should be invited to comment on the design to inform a special meeting of EXCO, to be held in public session at 09.30 on Tuesday 31 July, at which the design would be considered.

After discussion of the issues with the Attorney General, EXCO advised the Governor that the Speaker should be asked to summon the Legislative Council to meet on Monday 10th September.  There will doubtless be other business, but the primary purpose is to consider two short but important Bills related to two matters that were on the agenda this morning: one proposes to allow internet publication of updated laws, while the other proposes amendments to the Employment Rights Ordinance.  Both will be the subject of separate publicity during the next few days. The draft Bills will be posted on the SHG website by the end of this week, with explanatory information published after the weekend.

It is likely that the next meeting of the Legislative Council, after September, will then be in November.  The latest date on which a new election of Executive Council can be held is 13th November.  It is likely that there will also be further legislation for consideration by that time, but details depend on progress with formulation of underlying policies.

And with that our meeting ended at around 1pm.

Thank you for listening and a very good afternoon to you all.

**HE Governor Capes,**

**24 July 2012**