

# MINUTES of the EXTRAORDINARY CHIEF PLEAS MEETING

Held in The Assembly Room, Sark on 16<sup>th</sup> May, 2013 at 7.00pm.

**Present:** Sieur J.M. Beaumont OBE, Seigneur; Lt. Col. R.J. Guille MBE, President; K.N. Adams, Prévôt; T.J. Hamon, Greffier; W. Kiernan FCA, Treasurer.

**25 Conseillers** were present (see attached list).

Apologies from Conseiller Perrée attending a funeral in England.

## 0 Opening Remarks

0.1 President Read out a letter of thanks from Lord McNally which is attached to these minutes.

0.2 President Made the following statement –

*Mr Charles Maitland stood for election in the December 2008 General Election and polled 227 votes. At the subsequent ballot for terms of office he drew a four-year term of office which ended in January this year.*

*He re-stood for election in December last year and was again successful.*

*During his time in office he has served on the General Purposes and Advisory Committee, becoming its Chairman in June 2009, and remained so until his resignation as a Conseiller at the conclusion of the Easter Meeting this year.*

*He also served on the Finance and Commerce Committee and the Shipping Committee, as the GP&A representative.*

*In his letter of resignation he said that he found the position of Chairman of GP&A increasingly onerous and stressful and after four years and a recent serious operation found that he did not have the necessary energy, or will, to continue as a Conseiller.*

*I should like to record a vote of thanks to Mr Charles Maitland for his service to Sark as a Conseiller and wish him well in his other Sark activities.*

0.3 E. Baker Was grateful for the opportunity to address this Assembly regarding his own appreciation of the outstanding amount of work that was undertaken by Charles Maitland during his time as an elected Conseiller. Working alongside Charles for nearly five years on GP&A, with several months as his Deputy, Conseiller Baker was fully aware of Charles' commitment to the Committee and the considerable amount of hours spent on reports, research and the never-ending e-mails.

As a Conseiller and Chairman of GP&A, Charles was subjected to weekly abuse and that horrible green picture. Over the weeks and months the abuse gained momentum and became accusations without foundation, and personal attacks.

0.4 E. Baker Conseiller Baker read a letter sent to Charles Maitland by Deputy Peter Harwood, Chief Minister, Guernsey Policy Council –

*I wanted to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks on behalf of the Policy Council for the work you have undertaken as Chairman of the General Purposes and Advisory Committee in strengthening the relationship between Sark and Guernsey. Your tireless dedication has been valuable and is greatly appreciated by Guernsey. The Policy Council and its officials are grateful for your openness and candour in representing Sark's interests.*

*I wish you an enjoyable retirement, including your on-going involvement in La Seigneurie Gardens Trust and the publication of **Sark Life**. I look forward to reading the next issue and visiting the Gardens when I am next in Sark.*

0.5 President Reminded the Assembly that this Meeting will be recorded as a continuing trial but that the official record will be the Minutes produced by the Committee Secretary.

## 1 Minutes of the Easter Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2013

1.1 Conseiller Guy asked for two edits to paragraph 7.25 –

- after....**random** add **of whom nine were against deregulation.**
- In the second sentence replace **they** with **She**.....

1.2 With those amendments, the minutes of the Easter meeting were **APPROVED.**

## 2 Matters Arising

None.

## 3 Questions not related to the Business of the Day

None.

## 4 General Purposes & Advisory Committee Appointment of a Permanent Senior Administrator

- 4.1 Cook While introducing this report he clarified some of the concerns that have surfaced since it was written. At the Easter meeting of Chief Pleas, the GP&A Committee brought a report (Item 12) proposing that Sark appoint a Senior Administrator, someone to coordinate its somewhat disjointed administration and support Conseillers through the committees in the process of policy making and implementation.
- 4.2 During the debate it became clear that the Committee had not convinced some Conseillers of the need for, or precise function of this appointment. It was also made clear that the Assembly wished for tighter control of the costs proposed. In short, many felt unable to approve the proposition as presented, so consequently it was lost as these were clearly important issues that hadn't been answered satisfactorily.
- 4.3 The events that occurred subsequent to the Easter meeting are covered in this report. Suffice to say that this Extraordinary meeting was not requested by GP&A Committee but by a substantial group of Conseillers from outside that Committee. The GP&A Committee believes that the appointment of a Senior Administrator would allow the Sark Government to function far more effectively. The involvement of so many Conseillers (he believed almost all) in the process, has resulted in this meeting being called, shows a determination to properly scrutinise all proposals and act in the way the majority see fit.
- 4.4 It has been agreed that the salary will be a maximum of £35k with no other benefits – housing, health, pension etc., will not be additional. (Sark's very low taxes make this worth considerably more than it might seem to anyone used to living in a regime with much higher taxation).  
There will be other one-off costs involved in the recruitment process including advertising, interviewing and possible relocation costs. These will be kept to a minimum and, using the teacher recruitment system as a model, the Committee would expect the costs to be similar (in the region of £6k - £8k) in common with a teacher's expenses.
- 4.5 A figure of £30k was put into the 2013 budget to cover the possibility of this appointment and it seems that this will be sufficient to cover all the costs and salary this year, with a very similar budgetary requirement for next year. This implies almost no tax increase relative to this year's tax will be required for the post in 2014.
- 4.6 The position would be advertised both locally in Sark and outside Sark, in a manner and place most likely to attract suitably qualified individuals. It would be the intention of this Committee to appoint the person who is felt to be most suitable for the post. Another concern that keeps popping up is that the person appointed to this position will somehow take over and tell us what to do. He reiterated that the role is to coordinate, advise and support; the appointee would be answerable to Conseillers through the GP&A Committee; this is Sark, so to do otherwise is not an option!
- 4.7 One of the most important aspects of this role is the ability it will give Conseillers to better inform and present policy to the public. It will be much easier to gain the justification for proposals through better contact with the electorate and to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to have their views considered.  
It will be much easier as a result of this to give the Law Officers clear instruction for any resulting legislative requirement with the process more open and less stressful for all concerned.
- 4.8 Conseillers will be able to concentrate on policy for the benefit of the community, and future generations, keeping the community fully involved knowing that the administrative part of delivering that policy will be handled in a proper and timely manner. We are all working to keep Sark the very special place it has always been; in order to keep it that way we have to accept the responsibility that requires us to act in a manner acceptable to the wider world, fulfilling our responsibilities as a self-governing Crown Dependency.

- 4.9 Fry Admitted to voting against employing a Senior Administrator at the last Chief Pleas. She was not sorry that she did so because afterwards she felt as if a boil had been lanced and people were really talking, expressing their concerns and asking questions.  
As a result of that and a fuller understanding of the need for assistance, she was one of the Conseillers who requested this Extraordinary Meeting. She was far happier with the new Job Description and would be voting in favour of the proposition.
- 4.10 Adams Was pleased that the electorate were informed by mailshot about the events since the Easter Chief Pleas meeting which have led to this proposition being brought back for further consideration tonight. It was a good idea and to see that several members of the public took the time to contact Conseillers this week, ask questions and voice their opinions. This is an approach to be encouraged because it demonstrates that Committees are both seeking opinions and respecting them.
- 4.11 The recent Conseillers' Workshops had been of enormous help to her personally and enabled her to voice the reservations she had regarding the job description for this post. In particular, she had been concerned about the considerable overlap between that and the job description supplied to Chief Pleas in March for the President's appointment. Her opinion now is that there will inevitably be some overlap at first and perhaps always. Both the Senior Administrator and the President will need to liaise with various other officials, indeed Chairmen of Committees will also do this, but that over time and with goodwill and co-operation, roles and responsibilities of both the posts will become established and complementary.
- 4.12 This job is without doubt one of the most important ones created for the Sark Government and the electorate in recent times and she would be voting for the proposal because she felt that only by having a clear structure for government administration, will it be possible for Conseillers to properly plan for the future.
- 4.13 Byrne She too had appreciated the circular being sent to all households and she read from one response received –  
*Thank you for the recently received message from Conseillers, which I have read with interest and alarm. The alarm was caused by the job description and the intention of Chief Pleas to appoint a permanent person to the position at what seems a very high salary for the job which is, after all, the kind of administration that any literate, educated person could achieve.*
- 4.14 *Sark has many good, experienced people already in situ from whom to draw. I sincerely hope the position will be advertised "in-house" before Chief Pleas casts further afield. Two local, qualified people already resident and working part-time could fulfil all the bullet points in the job description and save the Island spending money which is urgently required elsewhere.*
- 4.15 *I do appreciate that Conseillers are under considerable stress with workloads and administrative assistance is required to free them to concentrate on their work – work they do for nothing except for the love of Sark. If I was a Conseiller, giving so much of my time, I might feel £35k plus expenses being offered to a non-governmental "secretary" rather insulting (my opinion only) and a cause for resentment, especially if they were to be recruited from outside.*
- 4.16 Conseiller Byrne had responded with the following comments –  
*Thanks.....it is always good to hear what Sark people are thinking and wanting; that is so important and what I always try to take into account. I have had lots of conversations with other Conseillers and the GP&A Members and I have gained a lot from their views. It has been a very difficult time for all Conseillers as it has for the other Sark residents, with all the changes we must go through to become able to cope with everything that is being thrown at us. I have gone from thinking – "what do we do with a civil servant?" – to thinking "Yes, we really do need someone to help us or we, and in particular the GP&A Committee, will no longer be able to function".*

- 4.17 Byrne *I agree that that this person could and should be a locally based person if at all possible and, if not, then I think someone's suggestion that a local person should be trained up to do the job is a very good one. It should be kept within Sark if at all possible; I certainly hope that the Conseillers and others who give their time free of charge will not feel resentful of this person's salary and I guess only time will tell if that becomes the case. I definitely don't get that feeling from anyone at the moment. The person will have a lot of work on their plate and apparently the £35k is around the right amount for someone doing the same kind of civil servant role in the UK.*
- 4.18 *I do feel that in the rush to bring someone in, the job description (which was drafted by Colin Kniveton), the open-ended salary and the provision of accommodation, were, I believe, the reasons that the proposition was lost at the last Chief Pleas. The Conseillers do feel that we need this extra help, not only to lighten the workload, which is huge, particularly for GP&A Members, but is also needed to bring together the committees to "join-up" the work which everyone is doing and just generally make things run smoother.*
- 4.19 *I can tell you that there were many who wanted the job to be advertised locally first but it was felt that we should be advertising the post to everyone and then the best candidate, wherever they might live, would be the right person for the job. I hope that the people who undertake the interviews and the decision on who to appoint, will take all this into account and I feel confident they will.*
- 4.20 *I love being in Chief Pleas, even if it is a thankless job sometimes, but I can say, hand on heart, that all the Members are there because they want to see Sark retain its independence and to be able to run itself in the best way possible and without the stresses of recent times. We are fighting hard to keep Sark the place that we love and this feels like a step in the right direction. I just hope it makes Chief Pleas stronger and helps us to achieve all the things we want to achieve.*
- 4.21 Cocksedge Chief Pleas over the years has gone about the business of running the Government on the back of moderation and stability along with well honoured traditions. It has seen many changes over recent years brought about by the involvement of the wider world. The pace has been rapid at times and not to everybody's liking. Conseillers are confronted daily and, to protect Sark's unique way of life, they sometimes hastily put legislation in place which is not best practice. Chief Pleas has to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century including human rights, economic fluctuations and changes to the environment. He felt an independent Senior Administrator in Sark would add value to the Government. The post would take a step back and take an impartial look and see what Chief Pleas needs to do to be fit for the twenty-first century - looking at the future rather than just today or this week - allowing space for Counsellors to make decisions based on thought and consultation to the benefit of the whole island.
- 4.22 The post would support the present staff who are struggling with the ever increasing work load and it should not be a job created to push paper from one side of the table to other. He thought in the long term it will save the island money. The post will also focus and galvanise the talent we already have - the Treasurer, the Greffier, the Committee Secretaries, other administration staff including various voluntary groups/persons who undertake research on various subjects on behalf of Chief Pleas. Providing up to date information on policies to enable Conseillers to prepare informative papers for consultation with the general public; another cog in the machinery of government from which the public will gain information. By looking at the long term policies, savings could be made on resources and time spent on preparing papers.
- 4.23 Conseillers seem continually under pressure to deal with the present and have very little time to look to the future. With a new streamlined backroom staff organisation, more time should become available to dedicate to that future thinking. The post would create continuity in our relationship with other jurisdictions. The Islands are working more and more together to cut costs - border controls, health & medical issues and alternative energy are all examples. A person in the position would fight Sark's corner and make savings in certain fields by working together. He accepted that it will cost in the short term but thought by having an impartial new approach it could turn Sark into a prosperous community again where everybody benefits from increased wealth. He would be supporting the motion.

4.24 S. Williams Conceded that the previous speakers had covered most of the things that she had intended to say. She admitted that, together with Conseiller Elizabeth Dewe, they had given the GP&A Committee a hard time previously on identifying and justifying the costs. Through the Conseillers' Workshops, there had been the opportunity to seek explanation and resolve areas of conflict; she was now content that no further increases beyond those already accepted for 2013 to fund this post would be required in future years. She would support.

4.25 Melling Called for a named vote.

4.26 **Proposition – CARRIED on a named vote - 21 Pour, 4 Contre**  
**That Chief Pleas authorises the General Purposes and Advisory Committee to take all necessary steps to recruit a Senior Administrator on a full time basis, and agrees to the appointment of a suitable candidate once the recruitment process has been concluded.**

## **5 General Purposes & Advisory Committee** **To elect two new Members to the Committee to fill the current vacancies.**

5.1 Bache In considering possible candidates to fill the two vacancies, GP&A Committee was mindful of the future as the term of office of three current Members ends in January 2015. It has looked towards Conseillers who could carry on for three years in order to provide continuity.

Conseillers Fry and Cottle are therefore nominated by the Committee.  
(There were no further nominations from the floor)

5.2 **Proposition – CARRIED**  
**That Conseillers Fry & Cottle be elected to the General Purposes & Advisory Committee.**

This meeting closed at 7.32pm

Brian Garrard CMILT (Sark Committee Secretary) 17<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013

President of Chief Pleas

The Greffier

Finalised on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2013

The reports, to which these decisions refer, are shown in full on the website

**[www.gov.sark.gg](http://www.gov.sark.gg)**

and are also available from the Committee Office for a small charge per sheet.

### **Forthcoming meetings for Chief Pleas Members**

**MIDSUMMER MEETING – Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> JULY 2013 at 10.00am**

Agenda closes -

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2013 at 3.00pm**

Papers distributed to Members before Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

# MEMBERS OF CHIEF PLEAS

Extraordinary Chief Pleas Meeting – 16<sup>th</sup> May 2013

	Attending	Item 4							
Seigneur – Sieur J.M. Beaumont OBE	/								
The President – Lt. Col. R. Guille MBE	/								

## CONSEILLERS

2	Mr. D.T. Cocksedge	/	P						
2	Mrs. H.M. Plummer	/	P						
2	Mr. D.W. Melling	/	C						
2	Mr. C.R. Nightingale	/	P						
2	Mr. A.P.F. Bache CMG	/	P						
2	Mr. E. Baker	/	P						
2	Mr. S.B. Gomoll	/	P						
2	Mrs. D. Baker	/	P						
2	Mr. A.G. Ventress	/	C						
2	Mr. A.J. Cook	/	P						
2	Ms. M.A. Perrée	A	-						
2	Ms. J. Guy	/	P						
2	Mr J. Hunt	/	P						
4	Mrs. S. Williams	/	P						
4	Mrs. H. D. Fry	/	P						
4	Mrs. K. Adams	/	P						
4	Mr. R.J. Dewe	/	P						
4	Ms. E.M. Dewe	/	P						
4	Mr. M.J Mann	/	P						
4	Mr. A. Dunks	/	P						
4	Mr. A.C. Prevel	/	C						
4	Mr. P.J. Williams	/	C						
4	Mrs. R.E. Byrne	/	P						
4	Ms. C.D. Audrain	/	P						
4	Mrs. M. Mallinson	/	P						
4	Mr. R.W. Cottle	/	P						
4	Vacancy	-	-						
2	Vacancy	-	-						

<b>2 – Term of office ends in January 2015</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>Contre</b>
<b>4 – Term of office ends in January 2017</b>	<b>/</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Pour</b>

Brian Garrard, Committee Secretary CMILT, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2013



Ministry of  
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Open letter to the Chief Pleas of Sark  
La Chasse Marrette  
Sark  
Channel Islands  
GY10 1SF

30 April 2013

Dear Members,

**VISIT TO SARK**

I would like to thank you all for the warm welcome that you extended to Rebecca, Camisha, Cathryn and me during our recent visit to Sark. I was glad to have the opportunity to meet the Chief Pleas again and to discuss your plans for the future governance of the Island.

Having spoken to over 200 people during my visit, I am keenly aware that the people of Sark are passionate about their community, about their way of life and about preserving Sark's uniqueness. As the Vision for Sark document makes clear, Sark has a number of issues to address and needs to adapt in order to meet those challenges. Through the continued hard work and commitment of members of the Chief Pleas I believe you will meet those challenges.

I would like to reassure you that the UK Government has no agenda beyond a continuing commitment to supporting Sark in strengthening itself for the future and to ensure that Sark has the support necessary to deliver the principles of good governance. I am optimistic that Chief Pleas can ensure that these principles are put into practice to support Sark's future.

My officials and I stand ready to provide such practical support as is felt necessary by Chief Pleas.

Yours Sincerely,  
Tom McNally

**TOM MCNALLY**