PAAC

PARLIAMENT

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

SIXTH REPORT OF THE

THE COMMITTEE ON

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS

THIRD SESSION OF THE 11TH PARLIAMENT

INQUIRY

Examination into the Tobago House of Assembly with specific reference to Accountability and Transparency, Inventory Control, Internal Audit, Sub - Head 02- Goods and Services, Sub - Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, Head 04 - Current Transfers and Subsidies and Sub– Head 09 Development Programme – Consolidated Fund.

Public Administration and Appropriations Committee

The Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC) is established by Standing Order 102 and 92 of the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively. The Committee is mandated to consider and report to Parliament on:

(a) *the budgetary expenditure of Government agencies to ensure that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval;*

(b) *the budgetary expenditure of Government agencies as it occurs and keeps Parliament informed of how the budget allocation is being implemented; and*

(c) *the administration of Government agencies to determine hindrances to their efficiency and to make recommendations to the Government for improvement of public administration.*

Current membership

Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George	Chairman
Dr. Lackram Bodoe	Vice-Chairman
Ms. Nicole Olivierre	Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	Member
Mr. Clarence Rambharat	Member
Mr. Daniel Dookie	Member
Mr. Wade Mark	Member
Mr. Ronald Huggins	Member
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine	Member
Ms. Jennifer Raffoul	Member

Committee Staff

The current staff members serving the Committee are:

Ms, Keiba Jacob	Secretary to the Committee
Ms. Sheranne Samuel	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Rachel Nunes	Graduate Research Assistant
Mr. Brian Lucio	Graduate Research Assistant

Publication

An electronic copy of this report can be found on the Parliament website using the following link:
http://www.ttparliament.org/committee_business.php?mid=19&id=232&pid=28

Contact Information

All correspondence should be addressed to:

The Secretary
Public Administration and Appropriations Committee
Office of the Parliament
Level 3, Tower D
The Port of Spain International Waterfront Centre
1A Wrightson Road, Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Tel: (868) 624-7275 Ext 2372, 2373; 2409 Fax: (868) 625-4672
Email: paac@ttparliament.org

Date Laid in HOR: Dec 15, 2017 Date Laid in Senate: Jan 23, 2018

Table of Contents

Members of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee

Ms. Nicole Olivierre
Member

Ms. Jennifer Raffoul
Member

Mr. Ronald Huggins
Member

Mr. Wade Mark
Member

Mr. Daniel Dookie
Member

Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine
Member

Mr. Clarence Rambharat
Member

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC) is established by Standing Order (S.O.) 102 and 92 of the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively. The Committee is mandated to consider and report to Parliament on:

a) the budgetary expenditure of Government agencies to ensure that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval;

b) the budgetary expenditure of Government agencies as it occurs and keep Parliament informed of how the budget allocation is being implemented; and

c) the administration of Government agencies to determine hindrances to their efficiency and to make recommendations to the Government for improvement of public administration.

This Report of the PAAC for the Second Session of the Eleventh Parliament contains the details of the examination of the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) on –

- Accountability and Transparency;
- Inventory Control;
- Internal Audit;
- Goods and Services;
- Minor Equipment Purchases;
- Current Transfers and Subsidies; and
- Development Programme – Consolidated Fund.

In undertaking this examination, the Committee looked at overarching issues such as Accountability and Transparency, Inventory Control and Internal Audit as well as specific Sub – Heads. The Committee employed two (2) mechanisms: written submissions and a Public Hearing. The Committee made a general call for written submissions from the Assembly and conducted a review and analysis of the written submissions. Subsequently, the Committee conducted a Public Hearing with the THA. A subsequent request for additional information was made.

The Committee has submitted recommendations related to the issues identified. Observations and recommendations are presented in Chapter 2.

INTRODUCTION

THE COMMITTEE

The PAAC of the Eleventh Republican Parliament was established by the revised Standing Orders to:

- examine current public expenditure, thereby capturing the full budget cycle by providing Parliamentary oversight of the implementation of the budget; and
- conduct a real time examination of the expenditure by Ministries and Departments.

In the 11th Parliament the Members of the Committee were appointed by resolutions of the House of Representatives and the Senate at sittings held on Friday November 13, 2015 and Tuesday November 17, 2015 respectively. However, by a Resolution of the Senate passed on December 19, 2016, Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir was appointed in lieu of Ms. Melissa Ramkissoon.

In the 11th Parliament the Members of the Committee were appointed by resolutions of the House of Representatives and the Senate at sittings held on Friday November 13, 2015 and Tuesday November 17, 2015 respectively. However, by a Resolution of the Senate passed on December 19, 2016, Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir was appointed in lieu of Ms. Melissa Ramkissoon. Additionally by a Resolution of the Senate passed on November 28, 2017, Mr. Ronald Huggins was appointed in lieu of Ms. Allyson Baksh and Ms. Jennifer Raffoul was appointed in lieu of Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir. Further by a Resolution of the House of Representatives passed on December 01, 2017, Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine was appointed in lieu of Mr. Maxie Cuffie.

The Committee in the discharge of its Parliamentary Financial Oversight function of monitoring the implementation of the budget focused on the expenditure and internal control measures of the THA as it relates to the following:

- Accountability and Transparency;
- Inventory Control;
- Internal Audit;

- Accountability and Transparency;
- Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services;
- Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases;
- Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; and
- Sub-Head 09: Development Programme – Consolidated Fund.

The objective of the Committee's inquiry was to determine whether there was accountability, transparency and value for money in the use of public funds.

METHODOLOGY

<u>Determination of the Committee's Work Programme</u>

At an in-camera meeting of the Committee on Wednesday November 16, 2016, it was agreed that the Committee would commence an inquiry into the THA.

Based on these discussions, the Committee identified two (2) possible approaches to conduct its examination:

- macro approach; and
- specific Sub-Heads of Expenditure.

Review of Documents

The Committee deliberated on the budget documents, namely:

i. The Draft Estimates of Expenditure
ii. The Ministry of Finance's Call Circular
iii. General Warrant

The Committee noted the total allocations for Goods and Services, Minor Equipment Purchases and Current Transfers and Subsidies and Development Programme - Consolidated Fund for fiscal year 2016/2017 were as follows:

Sub-Head	Total – 2017
Goods and Services	$608,887,000
Minor Equipment Purchases	$31,407,700
Current Transfers and Subsidies	$653,033,900
Development Programme – Consolidated Fund	$288,590,000

Current Transfers and Subsidies refers to the transfer of funds to Regional Bodies, Educational Institutions, Non-Profit Organisations, State Enterprises and Subsidies etc.

The Development Programme consists of the Consolidated Fund and Infrastructure Development Fund. This constitutes the Capital Expenditure component of the National Budget and is used by the Government as a strategic tool to effectively execute its policies and achieve its national development objectives. This expenditure is intended to fund projects and programmes which are investments geared collectively towards stimulating economic growth and achieving high human development.

- The Consolidated Fund refers to Direct Charges from the Consolidated Fund; and
- The Infrastructure Development Fund refers to a transfer from the allocation to the Ministry of Finance.

The Committee determined the examination would begin by a call for written responses to the THA to questions posed by the Committee. Questions[1] were sent on January 25, 2017 and written responses were requested to be submitted by February 10, 2017. The written responses were received on February 10, 2017.

Implementation of the Work Programme

The Committee deliberated on the responses submitted by the THA and agreed to conduct a Public Hearing based on the content of the response and current matters in the public domain.

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process outlines steps to be taken by the Committee when conducting an inquiry into an entity or issue. The following steps outline the Inquiry process followed by the PAAC for the examination of the THA:

i. Identification of entities to be examined;

   At a meeting held on Wednesday, November 30, 2016, the Committee agreed to examine the THA.

ii. Preparation of Inquiry Proposal for the THA. The format of the Inquiry Proposal is as follows:

   I. Description
   II. Background;
   III. Overview of Expenditure
   IV. Rationale/Objective of Inquiry; and
   V. Proposed Questions.

[1] Questions sent to the Ministries and Departments are included in **Appendix I**.

iii. Consideration and approval of Inquiry Proposal by the Committee and upon approval, questions were forwarded to the THA for written responses on January 25, 2017.

iv. Production of an Issues Paper by the Secretariat for the Committee's consideration, based on the written responses of the THA. The Issues Paper identified and summarised matters of concern in the responses.

v. Determination of the need for a public hearing[2] based on the analysis of written responses of the THA. The relevant witnesses were invited to attend and provide evidence, at a public hearing scheduled for Thursday April 27, 2017

vi. Subsequent to the public hearing, additional information was requested from the THA on May 23, 2017. The responses were received on August 11, 2017.

vii. Report Committee's findings and recommendations to Parliament upon conclusion of the inquiry.

viii. Receive Ministerial Responses. Review responses.

[2] Public Hearings are information gathering mechanisms and forms part of Parliament's oversight role. Hearings are conducted to examine the operations of Ministries and Departments. At such hearings, the Committee questions witnesses (persons concerned with the agency or issue under scrutiny) in order to obtain information to make valid findings and recommendations, which addresses issues and challenges.

ISSUES, OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Inventory Control**

Written and oral evidence received by the Committee indicated that the Inventory Control function across the Divisions of the THA was deficient. The THA carried out annual checks on the Inventory Register, however, it was admitted to be inadequate by the THA officials present at the hearing. This shortcoming was attributed to a lack of human resources.

Furthermore, all of the THA's assets were not tagged. In an effort to address this issue, it was indicated to the Committee that a Note was before the Executive Council of the THA to engage a supplier of a web-based system to assist with asset management.

In general practice, the Inventory Register were audited in an effort to ascertain whether the entries in the register coincide with a physical representation of the entry. With regard to the THA, the Committee noted that the last audit conducted on the Inventory Register was in 2012.

Recommendations:

- ***The THA should submit a report to the Parliament on the status of the initiatives being undertaken to acquire the requisite Inventory Control staff by February 28, 2018.***
- ***The THA should submit a report to the Parliament on the status of the web-based system by February 28, 2018.***
- ***The THA should conduct an audit of its Inventory Register by February 28, 2018.***

2. **Internal Audit**

Written and oral evidence indicated that the Assembly's Internal Audit Unit, which had oversight of the ten (10) Divisions, was inadequately staffed. There were numerous instances in which the Internal Audit Unit was only able to do an annual audit every two years and in some instances some were never done.

As a result, the Accounting Officer indicated that the Executive Council approved the hiring on contract of audit assistants for the various Divisions. It was the intention of the Assembly to assign two (2) to three (3) Internal Audit personnel per Division pending the acquisition of the relevant staff.

The Committee noted with concern the oral admission that "at times there is a lack of respect shown to Internal Auditors". Additional evidence submitted by the Assembly specified that:

a. some supervisors in the Divisions did not comply with the recommendations made by the Auditors;
b. lower level staff who were assigned to work with the Auditors would shift their attention to other tasks without the Auditor's knowledge, even though the audit review was still in progress;
c. there were instances where it was observed that the details of the authority of the Executive Council Minutes were not correctly implemented;
d. Supervisors were either slow or reluctant to act on the Auditor's recommendations; and
e. there were instances when the interpretation of Regulations differed between the Auditor and the Supervisor and the Chief Administrator was required to intervene.

Recommendations

- ***The THA should submit a report to the Parliament on the status of the initiatives being undertaken to acquire the requisite Internal Audit staff and the assignment of said staff to each Division by February 28, 2018.***
- ***The THA should embark upon an employee sensitisation exercise into the objective of educating staff on the role and importance of the Internal Audit function to the proper functioning of the THA.***

3. Training

The Committee learnt that formal training to ensure compliance with updated international standards for the professional practice of internal auditing was last provided in 2013. This was attributed to the THA not being able to meet the mandatory minimum of trainees to have officials of the University of the West Indies commute to Tobago to carry out the training. Evidence received from the THA indicated that the intention was to train new Internal Audit personnel as well as staff already involved in the Internal Audit function.

Recommendations

- ***The THA should submit a report to the Parliament on the status of the training of Internal Audit staff by February 28, 2018.***

4. Risk Register

A Risk Register is a tool for documenting risks, and actions to manage or mitigate risk. The Risk Register is essential to the successful management of risk. As risks are identified they are logged on the register and actions are taken to respond to the risk.[3] Oral evidence received by the Committee revealed that the THA did not have a Risk Register notwithstanding the recommendations made by the Auditor that each Division should create its own Risk Register. This has left the THA susceptible to numerous unchecked risks which may adversely affect the THA.

Recommendations:

- ***The THA should ensure that all Divisions have operational Risk Registers by February 28, 2018.***
- ***The THA should submit a report to the Parliament on the status of the creation of Risk Registers by February 28, 2018.***

5. Realignment of Divisions

In 2017, the THA undertook a realignment exercise of its Divisions. As a result, some Divisions were left in need of office accommodation. Additional evidence indicated that an assessment was conducted to determine the space needed for the additional

[3] Stakeholder Map. https://www.stakeholdermap.com/risk/risk-register.html . Accessed on 21.9.2017

Departments. Following the assessment, arrangements were being made to find additional space where needed.

Recommendation:

- ***The THA should submit to Parliament a status update on the arrangements made to find additional office accommodation for its Divisions by February 28, 2018.***

6. Absence of Monitoring and Evaluation Units[4]

The Committee learned that all of the THA's Divisions did not have Monitoring and Evaluation Units. The following Divisions have Monitoring and Evaluation Units:

a. Office of the Chief Secretary (Planning Department),
b. The Division of Community Development Enterprise Development and Labour,
c. The Division of Infrastructure, Quarries & the Environment, and
d. The Division of Settlements, Urban Renewal and Public Utilities.

However, the following Divisions did not have Monitoring and Evaluation Units;

e. Division of Education, Innovation, and Energy;
f. Division of Finance and the Economy;
g. Division of Food Production and Fisheries;
h. Division of Health Wellness and Family Development; and
i. Division of Tourism, Culture and Transportation.

The absence of Monitoring and Evaluation Units severely hindered the Assembly's ability to adequately monitor and evaluate its programmes and projects.

Recommendations:

- ***The THA should take the requisite steps to establish functional Monitoring and Evaluation Units in the remaining five (5) Divisions by February 28, 2018.***

---

[4] Monitoring is carried out in order to track progress and performance as a basis for decision-making at various steps in the process of an initiative or project. Evaluation, on the other hand is a more generalised assessment of data or experience to establish to what extent the initiative has achieved its goals or objectives.

- ***The THA should submit to the Committee, a status update on all its Monitoring and Evaluation Units by February 28, 2018.***

7. **Community Liaison Unit**

Oral and written evidence received from the THA indicated that the THA utilised twelve (12) Community Liaison Officers to visit communities and consult the residents on the issues affecting them, for resolution by the relevant officer of the THA. Additional evidence revealed that the THA was reviewing this aspect of its outreach initiatives with a view to restructuring this unit.

Recommendation:

- ***The THA should submit a status report to Parliament on the review and restructuring exercise of this unit by February 28, 2018.***

8. **Rationalisation Exercise**[5]

Oral evidence received at the public hearing indicated that a rationalisation exercise was conducted in 2007 on the entire THA. Based on the exercise, the Cabinet approved several positions for the THA. However, a decade later, the THA indicated that several positions were before the Chief Personnel Officer awaiting reclassification, and a number of other positions were before the Service Commissions Department for the appointment of officers.

Recommendations:

- ***The Personnel Department should submit a status report to Parliament on the reclassification of positions arising from the THA's rationalisation exercise by February 28, 2018.***

---

[5] Rationalization is a reorganization of a company in order to increase its efficiency. This reorganization may lead to an expansion or reduction in company size, a change of policy, or an alteration of strategy pertaining to particular products. Similar to a reorganization, a rationalization is more widespread, encompassing strategy as well as structural changes.

- ***The Service Commissions Department should submit a status report to Parliament on the appointment of officers to their relevant positions with respect to the THA's rationalisation exercise by February 28, 2018.***

9. Establishment of Procurement Units

The Committee noted that the THA was in the process of establishing Procurement Units within all of its Divisions. Furthermore, the THA indicated that the Executive Council approved the establishment of a Procurement Oversight Unit which would oversee the procurement function throughout the THA.

Recommendation:

- ***The THA should submit a status report to Parliament on the progress made in establishing Procurement Units within all of its Divisions by February 28, 2018.***

10. Fraud Policy

According to Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, a fraud policy is a critical tool intented to raise awareness amongst staff that plans have been devised, to deal with and minimise the damage caused by any fraudulent attack. By explicitly defining actions that constitute fraud, an organization ensures that all employees and third parties are aware of what is and is not acceptable.[6] While the Committee acknowledges that some instances of fraud were detected by the THA's Internal Audit Unit, the Committee noted with concern that the THA did not have a fraud policy which made the THA vulnerable to fraudulent activities. Additionally, a fraud policy would assist the THA in streamlining processes as it relates to instances of suspected fraudulent activities by introducing standard operating procedures.

[6] Deloitte. Fraud Policies and Why You Need One. https://www2.deloitte.com/nz/en/pages/finance/articles/fraud-policies-why-you-need-one.html. Accessed on 13.11.2017

Recommendation:

- ***The THA should take the requisite steps to formulate a policy on fraud and submit a status report to Parliament on the progress made in implementing this policy by February 28, 2018.***

11. Provision of Furniture and Furnishings for Schools

The THA assured the Committee that additional furniture and furnishings will be procured for schools that were most in need. These schools were:

1) Scarborough Secondary
2) Signal Hill Secondary School
3) Harmon School of SDA
4) Goodwood High School

Recommendation:

- ***The THA should submit a status report to Parliament on the status of procuring additional furniture and furnishings for the Scarborough Secondary, Signal Hill Secondary School, Harmon School of SDA, and Goodwood High School by February 28, 2018.***

12. Business Incubator Programme

Oral and written evidence received from the THA indicated that the THA envisioned that under this programme, micro enterprise centres will be constructed to act as a business incubator for the small entrepreneurs. Thereafter, entrepreneurs would migrate from small-scale to large scale of operations. Additional evidence illustrated that out of a total of five (5) centres, three (3) were at 90% occupancy and two (2) were still under construction.

Recommendation:

- ***The THA should submit a status report to Parliament on the progress made in constructing the remaining two micro enterprise centres by February 28, 2018.***
- ***The THA should submit a status report to Parliament on the mechanisms implemented to improve occupancy levels at the micro enterprise centres by February 28, 2018.***

13. The Fish Processing Company of Tobago Limited (FIPCOT)

The Committee noted that this initiative was geared towards developing the capacity in the maritime sector in general and the deep sea fishing industry in particular. As part of its capacity building, the THA indicated that FIPCOT trained and certified twelve (12) persons as Basic Seamen Class IV under the International Convention of Training Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers 2010. Additional evidence indicated that neither a feasible study nor a cost benefit analysis had been done for the proposed modern fish processing plant although, a pre-feasibility analysis of the fish processing plants in Tobago was conducted.

Additionally, FIPCOT was originally mandated to establish a fish processing plant which was to operate in tandem with the Castara Fishing Initiative. The Castara Fishing Initiative was a project in which the THA purchased a long line fishing vessel, the Capital of Paradise 1 to be operated by a Castara fishing cooperative named C.P.O.W.E.R. Ltd. It was intended that the Castara Fishing Initiative and other fishers would supply catch to the fish processing plant. The Castara Fishing Initiative failed and FIPCOT was mandated to operate the Capital of Paradise 1.

Furthermore, FIPCOT was in the process of developing the designs for an ocean going general purpose vessel that can be utilized for long line fishing for tuna and also for catching flying fish and other species. The THA indicated that the design for the new vessel should be completed by October 2017.

Recommendation:

- ***The THA should submit a status report to Parliament on the design for the new vessel by February 28, 2018.***
- ***The THA should submit a report to Parliament on how the Assembly intends to utilise the Capital of Paradise 1 by February 28, 2018.***

14. Early Childhood Care and Education Centres (ECCE)

Written evidence received from the THA indicated that there were twelve (12) ECCE Centres under the THA's control. These centres were governed by Boards that were in partnership with the Division of Education, Innovation and Energy to oversee its operations. However, additional evidence revealed that most of the centres did not have a fully functional board. Therefore, the Division was looking into the configuration of the Boards with the intention of restructuring them in alignment with the ongoing rationalization process.

Recommendation:

- ***The THA should submit a status report to Parliament on the progress made in restructuring the centres' Boards by February 28, 2018.***

CONCLUSION

During the Second Session of the Eleventh Parliament, the PAAC conducted an examination into the Tobago House of Assembly with specific reference to reference to Accountability and Transparency, Inventory Control, Internal Audit, Sub - Head 02- Goods and Services, Sub - Head 03 - Minor Equipment Purchases, Head 04 - Current Transfers and Subsidies and Sub– Head 09 Development Programme – Consolidated Fund.. During the course of the examination which comprised of written submissions and a Public Hearing, the Committee discovered a number of issues such as weak Inventory Control and Internal Audit systems, lack of a risk register, absence of Monitoring and Evaluation Units etcetera.

The Committee is of the view that the adoption of its proposed recommendations would lead to greater accountability, transparency and value for money in the use of public funds. The Committee fully intends to continuously monitor the implementation of the recommendations proposed in its Report.

This Committee respectfully submits this Report for the consideration of the Parliament.

Sgd.
Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George
Chairman

Sgd.
Dr. Lackram Bodoe
Vice-Chairman

Sgd.
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy
Member

Sgd.
Ms. Nicole Olivierre
Member

Sgd.
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine
Member

Sgd.
Mr. Wade Mark
Member

Sgd.
Mr. Daniel Dookie
Member

Sgd.
Mr. Ronald Huggins
Member

Sgd.
Mr. Clarence Rambharat
Member

Sgd.
Ms. Jennifer Raffoul
Member

APPENDIX I

Questions submitted to the Tobago House of Assembly

Inventory Control

i. The Acquisition of Materials and Motor Vehicles

Questions:

1. What procedure regarding inventory control is currently being followed by the Department?
2. How does the Department ensure that proper procedure is always followed?
3. What measures are currently employed by the Department to ensure that value for money is always achieved during the process?

ii. Proper maintenance of the Inventory Register

Questions:

1. Who is responsible for the updating of the Inventory registry?
2. Are the persons in this department sufficiently skilled to undertake this task?
3. How often is the register checked for accuracy to ensure information listed is up to date?
4. Are the recommendations of the Auditor General's Department taken into consideration?
5. Have errors in the register been detected by the Accounting Officer in the past? If yes, provide details on the errors detected and how they were treated with.
6. Is the register updated in time for submission to the Auditor General Department?
7. What efforts are being made by the Department to ensure that the information presented in the inventory register is always accurate?
8. Does the Department have sufficient personnel to deal with the maintenance of the inventory register? Are assigned personnel properly trained?

iii. Tagging of the Department's Inventory

Questions:

1. Are all items in the Department currently tagged?
2. What is used to tag these items?
3. How often are checks made to ensure that all items are properly tagged?
4. How long does this process take?
5. What problems are encountered by the administration department when tagging equipment, etc.?
6. Has the tagging of items helped the Department with the maintenance of the inventory register?

iv. Safeguarding Assets

Questions:

1. How does the Department ensure the security of all assets? How effective is the system used?
2. How are the State's materials and equipment stored?
3. Are sensitive materials securely stored? Provide details.
4. On average, how much is spent per year by the Department to replace equipment?

v. Omission of entries in the Register

Questions:

1. For the period 2011 - 2015, how often did the Auditor General's Department identify instances of omission at your Department?
2. What items have been omitted from the registry? What was the nature of these omissions? Why were the items omitted from the registry?
3. What steps have been taken to ensure that these mistakes do not recur?

vi. The disposal of obsolete machinery and equipment (also Motor Vehicles)

Questions:

1. In light of the proposed proclamation of the procurement legislation, what measures, if any, have been taken by your Department in preparation?

2. How often does the Department perform checks for obsolete equipment?

vii. No Policy for the Acquisition of Motor Vehicles

Questions:

1. In light of the proposed proclamation of the procurement legislation, what measures, if any, have been taken by your Department in preparation?
2. What guidelines are currently being used by the Department to guide the process for the acquisition of motor vehicles? What is the source of the authority?
3. Have these guidelines proven to be efficient and transparent thus far? Provide details/examples.
4. What problems have been experienced with the employment of these guidelines? Provide details.

Internal Audit

i. Staffing of Internal Audit Units

Questions:

1. Is there an Internal Audit Unit in the Department?
2. How many persons are in this unit?
3. How many audit positions are on the Establishment? Provide details.
4. Is the Accounting Officer satisfied with the work being produced by this unit?
5. Is the Unit adequately staffed? If no, what is being done about this issue?
6. How many persons in this unit are qualified to perform internal audits?
7. Are internal auditing staff periodically trained to ensure compliance with updated International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing?

ii. The absence of a separate body for internal audit units to report to (conflict of interest)

Questions:

1. What happens after an Internal Audit Report is submitted to the Accounting Officer?

2. Is the Internal Audit Department allowed to perform an unbiased investigation?
3. What hurdles have been experienced thus far due to the line of responsibility currently in place?
4. Is there compliance with the recommendations of the Internal Auditor? Provide evidence of this.

iii. Efficiency of Internal Audit checks on specific areas

Questions:

1. Does the Department have a framework for executing internal audits?
2. How often are routine checks of the Department's activities performed by Internal Audiitors?
3. Does the Internal Auditor's work programme cover all areas of the Department's functions?
   i. If yes, provide evidence.
   ii. If no, why are certain areas not considered in the Internal Auditor's work programme?
4. At what point during the financial year is an internal audit performed?
5. The Auditor General identified a lack of Internal Audit control as a pervasive issue, as there was no evidence of this function. Are there still instances of no audits being performed? If yes, why?
6. What impediments have Internal Auditors experienced?
7. Is the Accounting Officer aware of this deficiency in the oversight operations of the Department?
8. What systems have been implemented to address issues identified by the Internal Auditor?
9. In what ways has the Department's Internal Audit Unit contributed to improvements in the performance of the Department?
10. What is the Department's policy on providing Internal Auditors with all supporting documents and records of transactions for audit?
11. Has a Charter of Internal Audit work been prepared for fiscal year 2017? If yes, has it been reviewed by the Accounting Officer? If yes, please provide evidence of this.

12. Is there a need to improve the Department's internal control system? If yes, what measures will be implemented to improve the Department's internal control system?
13. What will be done to ensure the Internal Audit work programme covers all aspects of the Department's functions?

iv. Internal Audit Unit performing other administrative functions

Questions:

1. What are the job titles of the persons currently employed in the Internal Audit Unit?
2. Is the internal audit staff required to perform other administrative duties? If yes, how does this affect the internal audit function?
3. When are they allowed to execute duties pertaining to the internal audit function?

v. Absence of a Defined Role for Internal Audit

Questions:

1. What problems have been encountered by the Department due to the absence of a defined role of the Internal Auditor in the Exchequer and Audit Act?
2. What mechanisms have been employed to work around these issues?
3. What advice would the Accounting Officer have for the Ministry of Finance when drafting an official Internal Audit definition?

Accountability

1. In relation to allocations to Divisions how does the Accounting Officer (AO) ensure there is an appropriate framework in place to provide him/her with the required accountability to Parliament?
2. What is the process used by the Accounting Officer to measure outcomes, evaluate performance and demonstrate value for money?
3. How does the Accounting Officer test whether projects and programmes are feasible and provide value for money at the start and throughout their life?
4. How does the Accounting Officer determine whether the framework for accountability, transparency and value for money at the Department is working?
5. Are there systems in place to measure whether this framework is reliable and efficient?

6. What is process for dealing with failure or underperformance in programmes and projects?
7. How does the Accounting Officer provide meaningful oversight of state enterprises, statutory bodies and other agencies receiving funding from the Department?
8. How does the Accounting Officer ensure accountability and value for money, transparency in satellite centres and Divisions of the Departments?
9. Is there a framework governing conflict of interest? Describe the framework.
10. What measures are used to address conflicts of interest once identified?
11. What strategies are being employed to ensure there is efficiency and efficacy in expenditure of the allocation to the Department?
12. Given the current economic climate, has any consideration been given to the employment of measures to eliminate waste and unnecessary expenditure and to increase revenue collection?

Sub-Head: Goods and Services

Division 02 - Office of the Chief Secretary

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. The allocation for Contract Employment increased by 35% in fiscal year 2017. How will the increase in allocation impact the Division?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Division?
3. How many contract vacancies exist at Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

Sub-Item: 22-Short Term Employment

1. How would this increase in allocation impact the Division?
2. What type of work or service is provided by short-term employees at the Division?

3. Are any persons hired on a short-term arrangement in excess of six (6) months? Provide details.
4. Are there persons currently employed on a short–term contract who were previously employed on a three (3) year contract?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Short-term Employment.
6. How many persons are employed on a long-term repeat basis on short-term contract in excess of one (1) year?
7. How many times have they been re-engaged? What was the justification?
8. Is there an appraisal system in place? Provide details of the system.
9. When was the last performance assessment conducted?
10. Prior to the re-engagement for each short-term employee, is an assessment conducted?
11. How does the Accounting Officer ensure value for money?

Sub-Item: 23 Fees

1. What types of fees are paid from this sub-item?
2. How has the decrease in allocation for this sub-item impacted the Division?
3. Are there policies regarding this sub-item? If yes, provide details.
4. What are the limitations for this sub-item? Please provide details.
5. Provide a breakdown of the fees paid for fiscal year 2016?
6. How does the Accounting Officer oversee the dissemination of funds for this sub-item?
7. Are there any measures in place to guarantee accountability and transparency with regards to this sub-item?
8. What measures have been put in place to ensure that the Accounting Officer carries out regular reviews and checks with which to assess and manage these funds?
9. What challenges and good practices exist, related to the financing of this sub-item?
10. How often are internal audit reports for items considered under this sub-item produced to ensure that there is some evidence of transparency and accountability? Provide a copy of report.
11. Have any strategies been implemented to assess the Division's expenditure and the potential to reduce the cost related to this expenditure?

Sub-Item: 66-Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions

1. Provide a detailed breakdown including objectives and costs of the Conferences, Seminars and Functions proposed for fiscal year 2017? Indicate which events are new.
2. What is the approval process for expenditure for these events?
3. What measures have been put in place to assess the benefits of Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions?
4. Is a post event assessment conducted and are findings considered and applied to improving future events?
5. Will this information be discussed and used to improve standards and effectiveness in a timely manner? If yes, provide evidence of this.

002 Information

1. What guidelines exist to ensure that the message from the Division is consistent and direct?
2. How will this decrease affect the Division's performance and achievement its mission in fiscal year 2017?
3. What challenges and good practices exist, related to the financing of this sub item?
4. How do you evaluate the return on investment on the promotions, publicity and printing? Is the Division satisfied with the return on investment? Provide details.
5. How often are the following items printed and updated and what is the total cost of each item as at November 30, 2016:
   a. manuals, forms, brochures;
   b. advertisements in the newspapers, television and the international publications?
6. How will the manuals and brochures printed and published benefit the Division?
7. How frequently will the Outreach Programmes be conducted? What is the estimated cost per Outreach Programme?
8. Is there a system in place for the creation, upgrade and maintenance of websites?
9. To what extent does the Division you utilise Social Media? Is the money spent on Social Media based on reach? How is effectiveness determined?
10. What measures have been put in place to ensure that the Division carries out regular reviews and quality checks with which to assess and manage the performance of service providers for promotion, publicity and printing? Provide a detailed breakdown.

11. Will this information be discussed with the service providers to improve standards and performance in a timely manner? Please provide evidence of this.

- 007 Public Administration

***Sub –Item:* 08 Rent/Lease – Office Accommodation and Storage**

1. The allocation for Rent/Lease – Office accommodation and Storage decreased by 30% in fiscal year 2017, what changes are anticipated in fiscal year 2017 for sub-item?
2. What is the procurement policy for acquiring property? Please provide details.
3. Provide a list of all the rental/leased Office Accommodations and Storage occupied by the Division to date and the total cost.
4. What are the monthly rental costs for each office and storage space? Are their attempts to establish ownership of rental/leased spaces?
5. Are the agencies, divisions or departments of the Division utilising these offices? Please provide evidence of this.
6. What systems will be implemented to ensure that rent/lease agreement payments are made in a timely manner and are recorded for transparency and accountability?
7. How does the Division evaluate and benchmark the rent/lease of office accommodation against purchasing office accommodation in areas such as procurement and cost of providing the service?
8. Are Internal Audit reports produced to ensure that there is value for money, accountability and transparency as regards with this sub-item?
9. Are site visits conducted to ensure transparency and to determine whether there has been value for money?

Sub-Item: 22-Short Term Employment

1. The allocation for Short-term Employment decreased by 62% in fiscal year 2017. How would this decrease in allocation affect the Division?
2. What type of work or service is provided by short-term employees at the Division?
3. Are any persons hired on a short-term arrangement in excess of six (6) months? Provide details.

4. Are there persons currently employed on a short–term contract who were previously employed on a three (3) year contract?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Short-term Employment.
6. How many persons are employed on a long-term repeat basis on short-term contract in excess of one (1) year?
7. How many times have they been re-engaged? What was the justification?
8. Is there an appraisal system in place? Provide details of the system.
9. When was the last performance assessment conducted?
10. Prior to the re-engagement for each short-term employee, is an assessment conducted?
11. How does the Accounting Officer ensure value for money?

- 008 Tobago Emergency Management Agency

Sub –Item: **08 Rent/Lease – Office Accommodation and Storage**

1. The allocation for Rent/Lease – Office accommodation and Storage decreased by 75% in fiscal year 2017, what changes are anticipated in fiscal year 2017 for sub-item?
2. What is the procurement policy for acquiring property? Please provide details.
3. Provide a list of all the rental/leased Office Accommodations and Storage occupied by the Division to date and the total cost.
4. What are the monthly rental costs for each office and storage space? Are their attempts to establish ownership of rental/leased spaces?
5. Are the agencies, divisions or departments of the Division utilising these offices? Please provide evidence of this.
6. What systems will be implemented to ensure that rent/lease agreement payments are made in a timely manner and are recorded for transparency and accountability?
7. How does the Division evaluate and benchmark the rent/lease of office accommodation against purchasing office accommodation in areas such as procurement and cost of providing the service?
8. Are Internal Audit reports produced to ensure that there is value for money, accountability and transparency as regards with this sub-item?
9. Are site visits conducted to ensure transparency and to determine whether there has been value for money?

- 009 Occupational Safety and Health

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. The allocation for Contract Employment decreased by 33% in fiscal year 2017. How will the decrease in allocation affect the Division?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Division?
3. How many contract vacancies exist at Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

Division 03 - Finance and Enterprise Development

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. How will the increase in allocation impact the Division?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Division?
3. How many contract vacancies exist at Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

Sub-Item: 28- Other Contracted Services

1. The allocation for Other Contracted Services decreased by 44% in fiscal year 2017. How will this decrease affect the Division?
2. Provide a detailed breakdown of the services to be procured in fiscal year 2017.
3. What is the procurement policy for obtaining goods and services under this sub-item?
4. What is the role of the Internal Auditor in monitoring expenditure for this sub-item?
5. Are Internal Audit reports produced to ensure there is evidence of transparency and accountability under this sub-item?

6. Are there appropriate mechanisms to monitor expenditure under this sub-item Other Contracted Services? If yes, provide a copy of the mechanisms for monitoring expenditure.

Sub-Item: 62 Promotions, Publicity and Printing

1. What guidelines exist to ensure that the message from the Division is consistent and direct?
2. How will this decrease affect the Division's performance and achievement its mission in fiscal year 2017?
3. What challenges and good practices exist, related to the financing of this sub item?
4. How do you evaluate the return on investment on the promotions, publicity and printing? Is the Division satisfied with the return on investment? Provide details.
5. How often are the following items printed and updated and what is the total cost of each item as at November 30, 2016:
    a. manuals, forms, brochures;
    b. advertisements in the newspapers, television and the international publications?
6. How will the manuals and brochures printed and published benefit the Division?
7. How frequently will the Outreach Programmes be conducted? What is the estimated cost per Outreach Programme?
8. Is there a system in place for the creation, upgrade and maintenance of websites?
9. To what extent does the Division you utilise Social Media? Is the money spent on Social Media based on reach? How is effectiveness determined?
10. What measures have been put in place to ensure that the Division carries out regular reviews and quality checks with which to assess and manage the performance of service providers for promotion, publicity and printing? Provide a detailed breakdown.
11. Will this information be discussed with the service providers to improve standards and performance in a timely manner? Please provide evidence of this.

002 Finance and Accounting

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. How would this increase in allocation impact the Division in this fiscal year?

2. How many contract positions exist at the Division relevant to this item?
3. How many contract vacancies exist at Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

Sub-Item: 22-Short Term Employment

1. How would this increase in allocation impact the Division?
2. What type of work or service is provided by short-term employees at the Division?
3. Are any persons hired on a short-term arrangement in excess of six (6) months? Provide details.
4. Are there persons currently employed on a short–term contract who were previously employed on a three (3) year contract?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Short-term Employment.
6. How many persons are employed on a long-term repeat basis on short-term contract in excess of one (1) year?
7. How many times have they been re-engaged? What was the justification?
8. Is there an appraisal system in place? Provide details of the system.
9. When was the last performance assessment conducted?
10. Prior to the re-engagement for each short-term employee, is an assessment conducted?
11. How does the Accounting Officer ensure value for money?

- 011 Business Development Unit

Sub-Item: 27 - Official Overseas Travel

1. The allocation for Official Overseas Travel decreased by 67% in fiscal year 2017, what changes are anticipated in fiscal year 2017 for employees?
2. How will this increase be utilised? Provide a detailed breakdown.
3. How often are individuals sent on these overseas trips? Please provide a detailed list of the Travel Schedule for 2017?

4. Provide a list of persons and their positions for whom funds have been granted for overseas travel by the organisation? What is the purpose of these Overseas Trips and how do they add value to the organisation?
5. How are these events going to be selected/prioritised? (in terms of attendance)
6. Provide a list of overseas travel facilities used by the Division.
7. Are there policies regarding this sub-item? If yes, please provide details.
8. How does the Division plan to monitor this sub-item to ensure transparency, accountability and value for money?

- 012 Consumer Affairs

Sub-Item: 28- Other Contracted Services

1. The allocation for Other Contracted Services decreased by 88% in fiscal year 2017. How will this decrease affect the Division?
2. Provide a detailed breakdown of the services to be procured in fiscal year 2017.
3. What is the procurement policy for obtaining goods and services under this sub-item?
4. What is the role of the Internal Auditor in monitoring expenditure for this sub-item?
5. Are Internal Audit reports produced to ensure there is evidence of transparency and accountability under this sub-item?
6. Are there appropriate mechanisms to monitor expenditure under this sub-item Other Contracted Services? If yes, provide a copy of the mechanisms for monitoring expenditure.

- 015 Financial Literacy Secretariat

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. How will the increase in allocation impact the Division?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Division?
3. How many contract vacancies exist at Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

- 016 Youth Energised for Success

Sub-Item: 22-Short Term Employment

1. How would this decrease in allocation affect the Division?
2. What type of work or service is provided by short-term employees at the Division?
3. Are any persons hired on a short-term arrangement in excess of six (6) months? Provide details.
4. Are there persons currently employed on a short–term contract who were previously employed on a three (3) year contract?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Short-term Employment.
6. How many persons are employed on a long-term repeat basis on short-term contract in excess of one (1) year?
7. How many times have they been re-engaged? What was the justification?
8. Is there an appraisal system in place? Provide details of the system.
9. When was the last performance assessment conducted?
10. Prior to the re-engagement for each short-term employee, is an assessment conducted?
11. How does the Accounting Officer ensure value for money?

Division 05 - Tourism and Transportation

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. The allocation for Contract Employment decreased by 27% in fiscal year 2017. How will the decrease in allocation affect the Division?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Division?
3. How many contract vacancies exist at Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

Sub-Item: 28- Other Contracted Services

1. The allocation for Other Contracted Services decreased by 60% in fiscal year 2017. How will this decrease affect the Division?
2. Provide a detailed breakdown of the services to be procured in fiscal year 2017.
3. What is the procurement policy for obtaining goods and services under this sub-item?
4. What is the role of the Internal Auditor in monitoring expenditure for this sub-item?
5. Are Internal Audit reports produced to ensure there is evidence of transparency and accountability under this sub-item?
6. Are there appropriate mechanisms to monitor expenditure under this sub-item Other Contracted Services? If yes, provide a copy of the mechanisms for monitoring expenditure.

- 002 Tourism

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. The allocation for Contract Employment decreased by 20% in fiscal year 2017. How will the decrease in allocation affect the Division?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Division?
3. How many contract vacancies exist at Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

Sub-Item: 62 Promotions, Publicity and Printing

1. What guidelines exist to ensure that the message from the Division is consistent and direct?
2. How will this decrease affect the Division's performance and achievement its mission in fiscal year 2017?
3. What challenges and good practices exist, related to the financing of this sub item?
4. How do you evaluate the return on investment on the promotions, publicity and printing? Is the Division satisfied with the return on investment? Provide details.

5. How often are the following items printed and updated and what is the total cost of each item as at November 30, 2016:
    a. manuals, forms, brochures;
    b. advertisements in the newspapers, television and the international publications?
6. How will the manuals and brochures printed and published benefit the Division?
7. How frequently will the Outreach Programmes be conducted? What is the estimated cost per Outreach Programme?
8. Is there a system in place for the creation, upgrade and maintenance of websites?
9. To what extent does the Division you utilise Social Media? Is the money spent on Social Media based on reach? How is effectiveness determined?
10. What measures have been put in place to ensure that the Division carries out regular reviews and quality checks with which to assess and manage the performance of service providers for promotion, publicity and printing? Provide a detailed breakdown.
11. Will this information be discussed with the service providers to improve standards and performance in a timely manner? Please provide evidence of this.

Division 06 - Education, Youth Affairs and Sports

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. How would this increase in allocation impact the Division in this fiscal year?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Department relevant to this Division?
3. How many contract vacancies exist in the Scholarships and Advanced Training Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

- 002 Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. How would this increase in allocation affect the Division in this fiscal year?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Department relevant to this Division?

3. How many contract vacancies exist in the Scholarships and Advanced Training Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

Sub-Item: 22-Short Term Employment

1. How would this increase in allocation impact the Division?
2. What type of work or service is provided by short-term employees at the Division?
3. Are any persons hired on a short-term arrangement in excess of six (6) months? Provide details.
4. Are there persons currently employed on a short–term contract who were previously employed on a three (3) year contract?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Short-term Employment.
6. How many persons are employed on a long-term repeat basis on short-term contract in excess of one (1) year?
7. How many times have they been re-engaged? What was the justification?
8. Is there an appraisal system in place? Provide details of the system.
9. When was the last performance assessment conducted?
10. Prior to the re-engagement for each short-term employee, is an assessment conducted?
11. How does the Accounting Officer ensure value for money?

- 003 Library Services

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. How will the increase in allocation affect the Division?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Division?
3. How many contract vacancies exist at Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?

5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

Sub-Item 43- Security Services

1. How are the security service providers contracted?
2. How will this decrease affect security at schools around the country?
3. Please provide a list of all contract agreements with each security service provider, the period of each agreement and the total expenditure incurred by the Ministry.
4. Explain the process used to approve services for payment.
5. Are there plans by the Division to implement additional security measures within schools?
6. Does the Division evaluate and benchmark its service provider(s) performance against other providers in areas such as transaction cost and practices and procedures? If yes, provide an example.

- 005 Sport

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. The allocation for Contract Employment increased by 29% in fiscal year 2017. How will the decrease in allocation impact the Division?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Division?
3. How many contract vacancies exist at Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

- 007 Happy Haven School – Tobago Council

Sub-Item: 28- Other Contracted Services

1. The allocation for Other Contracted Services decreased by 90% in fiscal year 2017. How will this decrease affect the Division?
2. Provide a detailed breakdown of the services to be procured in fiscal year 2017.
3. What is the procurement policy for obtaining goods and services under this sub-item?
4. What is the role of the Internal Auditor in monitoring expenditure for this sub-item?
5. Are Internal Audit reports produced to ensure there is evidence of transparency and accountability under this sub-item?
6. Are there appropriate mechanisms to monitor expenditure under this sub-item Other Contracted Services? If yes, provide a copy of the mechanisms for monitoring expenditure.

008 Tobago School for the Deaf, Speech and Language

Sub-Item: 28- Other Contracted Services

1. How will this increase impact the Division?
2. Provide a detailed breakdown of the services to be procured in fiscal year 2017.
3. What is the procurement policy for obtaining goods and services under this sub-item?
4. What is the role of the Internal Auditor in monitoring expenditure for this sub-item?
5. Are Internal Audit reports produced to ensure there is evidence of transparency and accountability under this sub-item?
6. Are there appropriate mechanisms to monitor expenditure under this sub-item Other Contracted Services? If yes, provide a copy of the mechanisms for monitoring expenditure.

Division 07 - Community Development and Culture

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. How will the decrease in allocation affect the Division?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Division?
3. How many contract vacancies exist at Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?

7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

Sub-Item: 22-Short Term Employment

1. The allocation for Short-term Employment decreased by 33% in fiscal year 2017. How would this decrease in allocation affect the Division?
2. What type of work or service is provided by short-term employees at the Division?
3. Are any persons hired on a short-term arrangement in excess of six (6) months? Provide details.
4. Are there persons currently employed on a short–term contract who were previously employed on a three (3) year contract?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Short-term Employment.
6. How many persons are employed on a long-term repeat basis on short-term contract in excess of one (1) year?
7. How many times have they been re-engaged? What was the justification?
8. Is there an appraisal system in place? Provide details of the system.
9. When was the last performance assessment conducted?
10. Prior to the re-engagement for each short-term employee, is an assessment conducted?
11. How does the Accounting Officer ensure value for money?

- 002 Community Development

Sub-Item: 01 Travelling and Subsistence

1. How would this decrease in allocation affect the Division?
2. Provide a detailed list of the positions/posts who receive travelling allowances?
3. What measures have been put in place to ensure that the Division carries out regular reviews and checks in order to assess and manage these funds?
4. What good practices exist, regarding the financing of this sub item?
5. What challenges exist, regarding the financing of this sub item?
6. Are Internal Audit reports produced to ensure transparency and accountability?

Sub-item: 21 Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings

1. In light of the allocation received, how would this decrease impact Repairs and Maintenance-Buildings?
2. How does the Office of the President plan to utilise the allocation received?
3. What systems are in place to review, prioritize and monitor the repair and maintenance of buildings?
4. Are Maintenance and Repair works carried out by staff? If no, what evaluation process is used for the selection and approval of contractors for same?
5. What buildings are being repaired and maintained under this sub-item?
6. What controls are in place to monitor the expenditure for this sub-item? Please provide detailed list.
7. What is the role of the Internal Auditor in the procurement function for goods and services under this sub-item?

Division 08 - Infrastructure and Public Utilities

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. How will the increase in allocation impact the Division?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Division?
3. How many contract vacancies exist at Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

- 002 Maintenance of Buildings

Sub-Item: 12 Materials and Supplies

1. How will this decrease in allocation affect the Division?
2. Provide a list of all the items used and the total cost of each item for the period 2015 - 2016.
3. Does the Division have an inventory control system? Please provide relevant documentation of such.
4. What is the method of procurement used to acquire Materials and Supplies? Can proper documentation be provided?

5. Who are the suppliers/providers of the items purchased under this sub-item?
6. What is the process used to recruit and select suppliers/providers of services under this sub item?
7. What is the system used for the payment of these suppliers/providers under this sub-item?
8. What oversight mechanisms are in place to ensure that there is value for money, accountability and transparency as regards this sub-item? Provide the relevant documentation.

Sub-item: 21 Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings

1. In light of the allocation received, how would this decrease impact Repairs and Maintenance-Buildings?
2. How does the Office of the President plan to utilise the allocation received?
3. What systems are in place to review, prioritize and monitor the repair and maintenance of buildings?
4. Are Maintenance and Repair works carried out by staff? If no, what evaluation process is used for the selection and approval of contractors for same?
5. What buildings are being repaired and maintained under this sub-item?
6. What controls are in place to monitor the expenditure for this sub-item? Please provide detailed list.
7. What is the role of the Internal Auditor in the procurement function for goods and services under this sub-item?

- 007 Mechanical Workshop

Sub-Item: 12 Materials and Supplies

1. How will this decrease in allocation affect the Division?
2. Provide a list of all the items used and the total cost of each item for the period 2015 - 2016.
3. Does the workshop have an inventory control system? Please provide relevant documentation of such.
4. What is the method of procurement used to acquire Materials and Supplies? Can proper documentation be provided?
5. Who are the suppliers/providers of the items purchased under this sub-item?

6. What is the process used to recruit and select suppliers/providers of services under this sub item?
7. What is the system used for the payment of these suppliers/providers under this sub-item?
8. What oversight mechanisms are in place to ensure that there is value for money, accountability and transparency as regards this sub-item? Provide the relevant documentation.

Division 09 - Agriculture, Marine Affairs, Marketing and the Environment

Sub-Item: 27 - Official Overseas Travel

1. The allocation for Official Overseas Travel decreased by 75% in fiscal year 2017 what changes are anticipated in fiscal year 2017 for employees?
2. How will this increase be utilised? Provide a detailed breakdown.
3. How often are individuals sent on these overseas trips? Please provide a detailed list of the Travel Schedule for 2017?
4. Provide a list of persons and their positions for whom funds have been granted for overseas travel by the organisation? What is the purpose of these Overseas Trips and how do they add value to the organisation?
5. How are these events going to be selected/prioritised? (in terms of attendance)
6. Provide a list of overseas travel facilities used by the Division.
7. Are there policies regarding this sub-item? If yes, please provide details.
8. How does the Division plan to monitor this sub-item to ensure transparency, accountability and value for money?

Sub-Item: 66-Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions

1. Provide a detailed breakdown including objectives and costs of the Conferences, Seminars and Functions proposed for fiscal year 2017? Indicate which events are new.
2. What is the approval process for expenditure for these events?
3. What measures have been put in place to assess the benefits of Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions?
4. Is a post event assessment conducted and are findings considered and applied to improving future events?

5. Will this information be discussed and used to improve standards and effectiveness in a timely manner? If yes, provide evidence of this.

- 002 Agriculture

Sub-item: 13 Maintenance of Vehicles

1. The allocation for Maintenance of Vehicles decreased by 41% in fiscal year 2017, what changes are anticipated in fiscal year 2017 for this sub-item?
2. Has any analysis been made between repairing/maintenance and purchasing to determine the best option to achieve value for money spent?
3. What systems are in place to review and monitor the maintenance of vehicles bought?
4. Based on the appropriation for the current fiscal year, how much has been spent to date and in what ways has the Division been achieving its goals, mission and vision?
5. Who are the service providers for this sub-item? How are the service providers hired by the Division?

- 005 Marine Resources and Fisheries

Sub-Item 43- Security Services

1. How are the security service providers contracted?
2. The allocation for Security Services decreased by 30% in fiscal year 2017. How will this decrease affect schools around the country?
3. Please provide a list of all contract agreements with each security service provider, the period of each agreement and the total expenditure incurred by the Division.
4. Explain the process used to approve services for payment.
5. Are there plans by the Division to implement additional security measures within schools?
6. Does the Division evaluate and benchmark its service provider(s) performance against other providers in areas such as transaction cost and practices and procedures? If yes, provide an example.

Division 10 - Health and Social Services

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. The allocation for Contract Employment increased by 22% in fiscal year 2017. How will the decrease in allocation affect the Division?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Division?
3. How many contract vacancies exist at Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

Sub-Item: 22-Short Term Employment

1. How would this decrease in allocation affect the Division?
2. What type of work or service is provided by short-term employees at the Division?
3. Are any persons hired on a short-term arrangement in excess of six (6) months? Provide details.
4. Are there persons currently employed on a short–term contract who were previously employed on a three (3) year contract?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Short-term Employment.
6. How many persons are employed on a long-term repeat basis on short-term contract in excess of one (1) year?
7. How many times have they been re-engaged? What was the justification?
8. Is there an appraisal system in place? Provide details of the system.
9. When was the last performance assessment conducted?
10. Prior to the re-engagement for each short-term employee, is an assessment conducted?
11. How does the Accounting Officer ensure value for money?

Sub-Item: 27 - Official Overseas Travel

1. The allocation for Official Overseas Travel decreased by 93% in fiscal year 2017, what changes are anticipated in fiscal year 2017 for employees?
2. How will this increase be utilised? Provide a detailed breakdown.

3. How often are individuals sent on these overseas trips? Please provide a detailed list of the Travel Schedule for 2017?
4. Provide a list of persons and their positions for whom funds have been granted for overseas travel by the organisation? What is the purpose of these Overseas Trips and how do they add value to the organisation?
5. How are these events going to be selected/prioritised? (in terms of attendance)
6. Provide a list of overseas travel facilities used by the Division.
7. Are there policies regarding this sub-item? If yes, please provide details.
8. How does the Division plan to monitor this sub-item to ensure transparency, accountability and value for money?

Sub-Item 43- Security Services

1. How are the security service providers contracted?
2. The allocation for Security Services increased by 39% in fiscal year 2017. How will this decrease impact schools around the country?
3. Please provide a list of all contract agreements with each security service provider, the period of each agreement and the total expenditure incurred by the Division.
4. Explain the process used to approve services for payment.
5. Are there plans by the Division to implement additional security measures within schools?
6. Does the Division evaluate and benchmark its service provider(s) performance against other providers in areas such as transaction cost and practices and procedures? If yes, provide an example.

- 005 Social Services

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. The allocation for Contract Employment increased by 62% in fiscal year 2017. How will the decrease in allocation affect the Division?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Division?
3. How many contract vacancies exist at Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?

5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

- 007 Probation Services

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

1. How will this increase in allocation impact the Division?
2. How many contract positions exist at the Division?
3. How many contract vacancies exist at Division?
4. How many are expected to be filled during this fiscal year?
5. Describe the recruitment and selection process, including the criteria used to hire persons on Contract Employment.
6. Is there a performance management system in place? If yes, how often is this done?
7. When was the last performance management appraisal conducted?

Division 12 - Planning and Development

- 002 Planning

Sub-Item: 66-Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions

1. Provide a detailed breakdown including objectives and costs of the Conferences, Seminars and Functions proposed for fiscal year 2017? Indicate which events are new.
2. What is the approval process for expenditure for these events?
3. What measures have been put in place to assess the benefits of Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions?
4. Is a post event assessment conducted and are findings considered and applied to improving future events?
5. Will this information be discussed and used to improve standards and effectiveness in a timely manner? If yes, provide evidence of this.

03 Minor Equipment Purchases

Division 06 – Education, Youth Affairs and Sports

- 002 Primary, Secondary and Vocational

Sub-item: 02 Office Equipment

1. What changes are anticipated in fiscal year 2017 for Office Equipment?
2. Provide details of the cost of each item that will be purchased in fiscal year 2017.
3. What method of procurement was used to purchase items under this sub-item? Can proper documentation be provided? If yes, please provide.
4. Please provide a list of all the costs associated with each item purchased to date.
5. Who are the suppliers/providers of this sub-item? How are they selected?
6. What oversight mechanisms are in place to ensure that there is value for money, accountability and transparency as regards with this sub-item? Please provide the relevant documentation.

Sub-item 03 Furniture and Furnishings

1. What changes are anticipated in fiscal year 2017 for Furniture and Furnishings?
2. How does the Division plan to oversee and account for the use of these funds under this sub-item?
3. Are Internal Audit reports produced to ensure there is evidence of transparency and accountability?
4. What measures are in place to guarantee value for money, accountability and transparency under these sub-items?

Sub-item 04 Other Minor Equipment

1. What changes are anticipated in fiscal year 2017 for Other Minor Equipment?
2. How does the Division plan to oversee and account for the use of these funds under this sub-item?
3. Are Internal Audit reports produced to ensure there is evidence of transparency and accountability?
4. What measures are in place to guarantee value for money, accountability and transparency under these sub-items?

Division 10 – Health and Social Services

- 004 Public Health and the Environment

Sub-item 03 Furniture and Furnishings

1. How does the Division plan to oversee and account for the use of these funds under this sub-item?
2. Are Internal Audit reports produced to ensure there is evidence of transparency and accountability?
3. What measures are in place to guarantee value for money, accountability and transparency under these sub-items?

Sub-item 04 Other Minor Equipment

1. How does the Division plan to oversee and account for the use of these funds under this sub-item?
2. Are Internal Audit reports produced to ensure there is evidence of transparency and accountability?
3. What measures are in place to guarantee value for money, accountability and transparency under these sub-items?

04 Current Transfers and Subsidies

009 Other Transfers

- **17 Tobago Cassava Products Limited**

1. What are the benefits of this sub-item to the Assembly?
2. How does the Accounting Officer oversee and account for the allocation of these funds?

18 Fishing Processing Company of Tobago

1. What are the benefits of this sub-item to the Assembly?
2. How does the Accounting Officer oversee and account for the allocation of these funds?

26 Project Financing Repayments

1. What are the benefits of this sub-item to the Assembly?
2. How does the Accounting Officer oversee and account for the allocation of these funds?

Division 05 Tourism and Transportation

- **13 Rolling Three – Year Tourism Plan**

- **17 Tobago Tourism Festivals**

Questions

1. How do these transfers function and what are the terms of reference for each?
2. What are the benefits of the expenditure for each transfer?
3. How does the Accounting Officer oversee and account for the allocation of these funds?
4. How does the Accounting Officer assess the effectiveness of these transfers?
5. Provide a detailed breakdown of the 2017 allocation?
6. Are there systems in place to ensure effective compliance, proper management of assets and adequate performance? If yes, provide a detailed description.
7. Are internal policies and procedures reviewed and revised to reflect current practice?
8. What is the Assembly's role in preventing, detecting and investigating fraud in these entities?
9. How does the Accounting Officer assess the effectiveness of the internal audit function as it pertains to these sub-items?
10. What systems are in place to ensure there is proper usage of funds?

19 Zip Line Management

1. Provide a brief description of this sub-item?
2. What are the benefits of this sub-item to the Assembly?
3. How does the Accounting Officer oversee and account for the allocation of these funds?

Division 06 – Education, Youth Affairs and Sports

- **03 Assistance to Sporting Organization**

1. What are the benefits of this sub-item to the Assembly?
2. How does the Accounting Officer oversee and account for the allocation of these funds?
3. What systems are in place to ensure there is proper usage of funds?

007 Households

- **02 Retirement, Severance Benefits and Compensation**

1. What accounted for the decrease in the allocation of this sub-item from **$500,000.00** in fiscal year 2016 (Revised) to **$100,000.00** in fiscal year 2017, which represents a decrease in the allocation of **$400,000.00**?
2. How do these transfer function and what are the terms of reference for each?
3. What are the benefits of the expenditure for each transfer?
4. How does the Accounting Officer oversee and account for the allocation of these funds?
5. How does the Accounting Officer assess the effectiveness of these transfer?
6. Provide a detailed breakdown of the 2017 allocation?
7. Are there systems in place to ensure effective compliance, proper management of assets and adequate performance? If yes, provide a detailed description.
8. Are internal policies and procedures reviewed and revised to reflect current practice?
9. What is the Assembly's role in preventing, detecting and investigating fraud in these entities?
10. How does the Accounting Officer assess the effectiveness of the internal audit function as it pertains to these sub-items?
11. What systems are in place to ensure there is proper usage of funds?

09 Early Childhood Care

1. What accounted for the decrease in the allocation of this sub-item from **$1,000,000.00** in fiscal year 2016 (Revised) to **$200,000.00** in fiscal year 2017, which represents a decrease in the allocation of **$800,000.00**?
2. How will this decrease affect persons employed at the Early Childhood Care Centres?
3. How do these transfer function and what are the terms of reference for each?
4. What are the benefits of the expenditure for each transfer?
5. How does the Accounting Officer oversee and account for the allocation of these funds?
6. How does the Accounting Officer assess the effectiveness of these transfer?
7. Provide a detailed breakdown of the 2017 allocation?
8. Are there systems in place to ensure effective compliance, proper management of assets and adequate performance? If yes, provide a detailed description.
9. Are internal policies and procedures reviewed and revised to reflect current practice?
10. What is the Assembly's role in preventing, detecting and investigating fraud in these entities?

11. How does the Accounting Officer assess the effectiveness of the internal audit function as it pertains to these sub-items?
12. What systems are in place to ensure there is proper usage of funds?

Division 07 – Community Development and Culture

005 Non-Profit Organisations

- **02 Assistance to Cultural Groups**
- **26 Assistance to Pan Group**

1. How do these transfers function and what are the terms of reference for each?
2. What are the benefits of the expenditure for each transfer?
3. How does the Accounting Officer oversee and account for the allocation of these funds?
4. How does the Accounting Officer assess the effectiveness of these transfers?
5. Provide a detailed breakdown of the 2017 allocation?
6. Are there systems in place to ensure effective compliance, proper management of assets and adequate performance? If yes, provide a detailed description.
7. Are internal policies and procedures reviewed and revised to reflect current practice?
8. What is the Assembly's role in preventing, detecting and investigating fraud in these entities?
9. How does the Accounting Officer assess the effectiveness of the internal audit function as it pertains to these sub-items?
10. What systems are in place to ensure there is proper usage of funds?

Division 10 – Health and Social Services

009 Other Transfers

- **07 Tobago Regional Health Authority**

1. What accounted for the increase in the allocation of this sub-item from **$293,894,000.00** in fiscal year 2016 (Revised) to **$356,281,900.00** in fiscal year 2017, which represents an increase in the allocation of **$60,387,900.00**?
2. How do these transfer function and what are the terms of reference for each?
3. What are the benefits of the expenditure for each transfer?
4. How does the Accounting Officer oversee and account for the allocation of these funds?
5. How does the Accounting Officer assess the effectiveness of these transfer?

6. Provide a detailed breakdown of the 2017 allocation?
7. Are there systems in place to ensure effective compliance, proper management of assets and adequate performance? If yes, provide a detailed description.
8. Are internal policies and procedures reviewed and revised to reflect current practice?
9. What is the Assembly's role in preventing, detecting and investigating fraud in these entities?
10. How does the Accounting Officer assess the effectiveness of the internal audit function as it pertains to these sub-items?
11. What systems are in place to ensure there is proper usage of funds?

Division 11 – Settlements and Labour

005 Non- Profit Organisations

- **01 Contribution to Non-Profit Organisations**

1. How do these transfers function and what are the terms of reference for each?
2. What are the benefits of the expenditure for each transfer?
3. How does the Accounting Officer oversee and account for the allocation of these funds?
4. How does the Accounting Officer assess the effectiveness of these transfers?
5. Provide a detailed breakdown of the 2017
6. allocation?
7. Are there systems in place to ensure effective compliance, proper management of assets and adequate performance? If yes, provide a detailed description.
8. Are internal policies and procedures reviewed and revised to reflect current practice?
9. What is the Assembly's role in preventing, detecting and investigating fraud in these entities?
10. How does the Accounting Officer assess the effectiveness of the internal audit function as it pertains to these sub-items?
11. What systems are in place to ensure there is proper usage of funds?

09 Development Programme – Consolidated Fund

002 Productive Sectors

01 Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

I. Production and Marketing

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

463 Agriculture access roads, Tobago - $25,000,000

1. What accounted for the decrease in the allocation of this sub-item from **$47,000,000.00** in fiscal year 2016 (Revised) to **$25,000,000.00** in fiscal year 2017, which represents a decrease in the allocation of **$18,000,000.00**?

H. Research and Development

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

580 Urban Forestry Programme

1. What accounted for the decrease in the allocation of this sub-item from **$4,024,106.00** in fiscal year 2016 (Revised) to **$500,000.00** in fiscal year 2017, which represents a decrease in the allocation of **$3,524,106.00**?
2. What changes are going to be made under this sub-item in fiscal year 2017?

A. Drainage and Irrigation

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

11 Other Economic Services

D. Tourism

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

G. Business Services

003 Business Incubator Programme

1. What accounted for the increase in the allocation of this sub-item from **$900,000.00** in fiscal year 2016 (Revised) to **$5,000,000.00** in fiscal year 2017, which represents a increase in the allocation of **$4,100,000.00**?
2. What changes are going to be made under this sub-item in fiscal year 2017?

009 Enterprise Development Company of Tobago

1. What accounted for the increase in the allocation of this sub-item from **$8,000,000.00** in fiscal year 2016 (Revised) to **$15,000,000.00** in fiscal year 2017, which represents an increase in the allocation of **$7,000,000.00**?
2. What changes are going to be made under this sub-item in fiscal year 2017?

019 Enterprise Assistance Grant Programme

1. What accounted for the increase in the allocation of this sub-item from **$1,400,000.00** in fiscal year 2016 (Revised) to **$3,000,000.00** in fiscal year 2017, which represents an increase in the allocation of **$1,600,000.00**?
2. What changes are going to be made under this sub-item in fiscal year 2017?

15 Transport and Communication

H. Sea Transport

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

004 Social Infrastructure

04 Education

B. Primary

1. Provide in brief detail status updates as at November 30, 2016 for each project under this Item?

C. Secondary

1. Provide in brief detail status updates as at November 30, 2016 for each project under this Item?

E. Special Education

1. Provide in brief detail status updates as at November 30, 2016 for each project under this Item?

G. Educational Services

1. Provide in brief detail status updates as at November 30, 2016 for each project under this Item?

07 Health

A. Hospitals

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

B. Medical and Dental Centres

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

C. Public Health Services

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

08 Housing and Settlements

B. Land Development

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

13 Recreation and Culture

A. Culture

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

C.Sports

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

14 Social and Community Services

A. Community Development

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

C. Welfare Services

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

D. Youth Development

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services

06 General Public Services

A. Administrative Services

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

F. Public Buildings

1. Provide in brief detail the reason(s) for the withdrawal of funding for each project under this Item?

G. Equipment and Vehicles

- **742 Purchase of Vehicles and Equipment**

What accounted for the increase in the allocation of this sub-item from **$4,000,000.00** in fiscal year 2016 (Revised) to **$15,000,000.00** in fiscal year 2017, which represents an increase in the allocation of **$11,000,000.00**?

APPENDIX II

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process outlines steps to be taken by the Committee when conducting an inquiry into an entity or issue. The following steps outlines the Inquiry process followed by the PAAC:

ix. Identification of entity to be examined;

x. Preparation of Inquiry Proposal for the selected entity. The Inquiry Proposal outlines:

    VI. Description

    VII. Background;

    VIII. Overview of Expenditure

    IX. Rationale/Objective of Inquiry; and

    X. Proposed Questions.

xi. Consideration and approval of Inquiry Proposals by the Committee and when approved, questions are forwarded to the entity for written responses;

xii. Issue of requests for written comment from the public are made via Parliament's website, social media accounts, newspaper and advertisements;

xiii. Preparation of an Issues Paper by the Secretariat for the Committee's consideration, based on written responses received from the entities. The Issues Paper identifies and summarises any matters of concern in the responses provided by the entity or received from stakeholders and the general public;

xiv. Review of the responses provided and the Issues Paper by the Committee;

xv. Conduct of a site visit to obtain a first-hand perspective of the implementation of a project (optional);

xvi. Determination of the need for a Public Hearing based on the analysis of written submissions and the site visit (if required). If there is need for a public hearing, the relevant witnesses will be invited to attend and provide evidence. There is usually no need to examine the entity in public if:

xvii. the Committee believes the issues have little public interest; or

xviii. the Committee believes that the written responses provided are sufficient and no further explanation is necessary.

xix. Issue of written request to the entity for further details should the Committee require any additional information after the public hearing.

xx. Report Committee’s findings and recommendations to Parliament upon conclusion of the inquiry.

APPENDIX III

Minutes of Meetings

THE PUBLIC ADMINSTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE –
SECOND SESSION, ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT

MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-THIRD MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY APRIL 27, 2017 AT 1:36 P.M.
IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS EAST MEETING ROOM, LEVEL 6, AND THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR, TOWER D, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE,
1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN.

Present were:

Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George	-	Chairman
Dr. Lackram Bodoe	-	Vice-Chairman
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	-	Member
Mrs. Allyson Baksh	-	Member
Mr. Maxie Cuffie	-	Member
Mr. Daniel Dookie	-	Member
Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir	-	Member
Ms. Candice Skerrette	-	Secretary
Ms. Sheranne Samuel	-	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Brian Lucio	-	Parliamentary Intern

Absent were:

Mr. Wade Mark	-	Member (Excused)
Ms. Nicole Olivierre	-	Member (Excused)
Mr. Clarence Rambharat	-	Member

COMMENCEMENT

1.1 At 1:36 p.m. the Chairman called the meeting to order.

1.2 The Chairman indicated that Mr. Wade Mark and Ms. Nicole Olivierre asked to be excused from the meeting.

EXAMINATION OF MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-SECOND MEETING

2.1 The Committee examined the Minutes of the Twenty-Second (22nd) meeting held on Thursday April 20, 2017.

2.2 The following corrections were made:

- Item 3.2, page 2: the word “meetings” before the word “Committee” was deleted.

  A full stop was inserted between the words “April” and “the” and “T” capitalised.

  “(Wednesday) in” was deleted and replaced with the word “from”.

2.3 There being no further omissions or corrections, the Minutes as amended were confirmed on a motion moved by Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy and seconded by Mrs. Allyson Baksh.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-SECOND MEETING

3.1 As per item 3.2, the Chairman thanked Members who provided comments on the Ministerial Responses to the First Report of the Committee since the last meeting.

3.2 As per item 3.5, the Chairman informed Members that the Reports on the Office of the President and on the System of Inventory Control would be laid in the Senate on Tuesday May 02, 2017 by Mrs. Allyson Baksh and in the House of Representatives thereafter by the Vice-Chairman.

3.3 As per item 9.2, the Chairman informed Members that additional questions were dispatched to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. The deadline for response was Thursday May 11, 2017.

COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

4.1 The Chairman advised Members that the response from the Ministry of Education was circulated and made available on Rotunda. The Issues Paper would be circulated prior to the hearing with the Ministry. The Chairman encouraged Members to get familiar with the submission prior to the hearing scheduled for May 10, 2017.

4.2 A request was made to provide Members with notifications when there were uploads to Rotunda.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSION - EXAMINATION OF THE TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY’S EXPENDITURE AND INTERNAL CONTROLS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017

5.1 The Chairman invited Members to review the Issues Papers on the Tobago House of Assembly. The Chairman reminded Members of the areas under examination:

- Inventory Control
- Internal Audit
- Accountability and Transparency
- Sub - Head 02 - Goods and Services

- Sub - Head 03 - Minor Equipment Purchases
- Sub – Head 04 – Current Transfers and Subsidies
- Sub – Head 09 - Development Programme – Consolidated Fund.

5.2 Members discussed the approach to be taken for the examination.

5.3 There being no further business for discussion in camera, the Chairman suspended the meeting at 2:25 p.m., to be reconvened in public.

EXAMINATION OF THE TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY'S EXPENDITURE AND INTERNAL CONTROLS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017

6.1 The Chairman called the public meeting to order at 2:34 p.m., in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room, Mezzanine Floor.

6.2 The following officials joined the meeting:

TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Mr. Raye Sandy	-	Chief Administrator
Mrs. Claire Davidson-Williams	-	Administrator, Division of Finance and the Economy
Ms. Esther Pilgrim-Soanes	-	Director of Finance
Ms. Shelly Trim	-	Budget Analyst IV
Ms. Petal-Ann Roberts	-	Senior Financial Analyst
Mrs. Bernice Jack-Edwards	-	Accounting Executive I
Mr. Allister Taylor	-	Chairman, Board of Survey
Mr. Bobby Andrews	-	Planning Coordinator
Ms. Cindy Hackett	-	Auditor III

6.3 The Chairman welcomed officials, members of the media and the public.

6.4 The Chairman outlined the mandate of the Committee and the purpose of the hearing. Introductions were then exchanged.

6.5 The following issues arose from the examination of the Tobago House of Assembly:

i. The realignment of Divisions within the THA and the impact on the operations of the THA;
ii. The mechanisms in place to bridge the gap between the realignment and the challenges created by same;
iii. The absense of a Risk Register within Divisions and plans to have it implemented;
iv. The status of the THA's submission of Audited Financial Statements and Administrative Reports to Parliament;
v. The reasons for the THA "occasionally" conducting checks on the Inventory Register;

vi. The rationale for Divisions and Units not non-tagging inventory;
vii. The use of a Web-Based-Solution to remedy the lack of Inventory Registers;
viii. The procurement of the Web-Based-Solution and its intended implementation date;
ix. The status of the THA's Inventory Control Procedure and the use of stock cards to monitor inventory;
x. The use of a Vehicle Register;
xi. The exclusion of vital information (depreciation of assets) from the Fixed Asset Register and how the Asset Management System will resolve the issue;
xii. The status of the Comprehensive Reengineering Programme;
xiii. Level of operational preparedness for the proclamation of the procurement legislation;
xiv. The effectiveness of the three quote system and the absence of a pre-qualification list for suppliers;
xv. The mechanisms put in place to ensure that assets are properly managed;
xvi. The possibility of smaller Divisions of THA having merged Procurement Units;
xvii. The plans to address the inadequate staffing of Internal Audit Units;
xviii. The measures being undertaken to provide training to current and incoming staff involved in internal auditing;
xix. The ways in which the THA ensures that the Internal Audits are free from bias;
xx. The mechanisms to treat with differences of opinion between the Executive Council and the Central Government;
xxi. The establishment of small Internal Audit Units within each Division;
xxii. Whether the recommendations contained in the Internal Audit Report are implemented;
xxiii. The progress made in filling the vacancies within the Internal Audit Unit;
xxiv. The factors used to determine high risk areas;
xxv. The lack of a formal Fraud Policy and the steps taken by Chief Administrator to prevent the recurrence of fraudulent activities;
xxvi. The level of effectiveness of the Monitoring and Evaluation Units;
xxvii. The mechanisms used to continuously monitor and evaluate projects;
xxviii. The role of the of Community Liaison Unit;
xxix. The issue of garbage collection;
xxx. The prioritisation of the needs of the Assembly given the reduced allocation for Short-term Employment;
xxxi. The ways in which persons on Short-term Employment are assessed;
xxxii. The Assembly's selection and employment of students during the July/August vacation;
xxxiii. The reasons for Internal Audit Reports not being completed for Minor Equipment Purchases;
xxxiv. The measurement of value for money with respect to employees;
xxxv. The effect of the current economic situation on the staffing needs of the Assembly;
xxxvi. The mechanisms implemented to oversee the disposal of non-functional furniture;

xxxvii. The ways in which Divisions ensure that selection of suppliers is free from biases;
xxxviii. Clarification of what was meant by a "robust accounting system";
xxxix. The status of the Processing Company of Fishing Tobago's (FIPCOT) modern processing plant and whether a feasibility study was conducted;
xl. Status of the 2015 and 2016 Audited Financial Statements for FIPCOT;
xli. The expansion of the Business Incubator Centres;
xlii. The process to determine the communities that get micro centres,
xliii. The monitoring of contracts between the THA and International Airlines;
xliv. The absence of a recent audit into airline subventions;
xlv. The issues arising out of the THA's most recent Audited Financial Statements;
xlvi. The reasons for the Divisional Heads not attending the Public Hearing; and
xlvii. The recommendations to assist the THA in performing its duties and functions.

6.6 The Chairman thanked officials for attending and they were excused.

[Please see the verbatim notes for the detailed oral submission of the witnesses]

SUSPENSION

7.1 At 5:37 p.m., the Chairman suspended the *public* meeting to resume *in camera* for a post-hearing discussion *w*ith Members only.

RESUMPTION

8.1 At 5:40 p.m. the Chairman resumed the meeting *in camera*.

POST-HEARING DISCUSSION

9.1 The Chairman sought Members' views on the public hearing. The Committee expressed concern with the system of Internal Audit at the Tobago House of Assembly and the lack of a conflict of interest policy.

9.2 The Committee agreed that additional questions would be sent to the Tobago House of Assembly. [**Please see Appendix 1**]

ADJOURNMENT

10.1 There being no other business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting to **Wednesday May 10, 2017 at 1:30 p.m**. when the Committee would examine the Ministry of Education.

10.2 The adjournment was taken at 5:48 p.m.

We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

May 09, 2017

APPENDIX 1

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUESTED FROM THE TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

General

1. State the active steps being taken to overcome the staffing and accommodation issues brought about by the realignment of Divisions undertaken by the THA.
2. How many Community Liaison Officers are employed by the THA?
3. Provide information on the number of agricultural access roads improved in fiscal 2017 thus far. Provide a listing.
4. Provide recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the THA and correct any issues in relation to areas under examination.

Inventory Control

5. With reference to the procedure used to record inventory, what measures are in place to eliminate the probability/occurrence of human error?
6. Which unit is assigned to maintain the register of vehicles? Provide details.
7. When was the last check conducted on the Inventory Register? What were the findings?
8. When was the last audit conducted on the Inventory Register? Are all Divisions required to conduct audits at the same time?
9. Has there been any attempts to acquire staff with the required skill set to maintain the Inventory Registers?
10. Which particular Division/Department don't keep registers?
11. Does the THA have penalties for failure to keep an Inventory Register by the THA? If yes, what are they? If no, why not?
12. In the Divisions/Departments where registers are not kept, how does these Division/ Department keep track of inventory?
13. Have any attempts been made to collaborate with the Public Service Academy regarding training?
14. What steps have been taken to solve the staffing issues?
15. Are there plans to provide the necessary training for personnel currently employed?
16. Specifically, which items are tagged and which items are not? Does this vary across Divisions/Departments?
17. Please state the Divisions/Departments where the tagging of all items is done.
18. Does the tagging of some items, occur in specific Divisions/Departments or all Divisions and Departments? If yes, why?

19. With regard to the problems faced when tagging, has the THA considered alternative methods of tagging?
20. Has the variety of media used to tag items proven to be effective?
21. When was the last check conducted to ensure that all items are properly tagged?
22. How long (timeframe) does it take for all inventory items to be tagged?
23. How does the Department account for items secured in the various offices?
24. What has been done to rectify the "occasional" ineffectiveness (e.g. smaller items being easily removed between locations) of the system used to safeguard assets?
25. It was indicated that the Divisions/Departments faced the problem of keeping track of small items which are kept in fireproof cabinets and vaults. How are these items easily removed from these areas?
26. Which personnel have authorised access to the vaults, storerooms and fireproof cabinets?
27. Provide a breakdown of the $9,310,806 spent per year by the THA on Minor Equipment, identifying equipment purchased in fiscal year 2016.
28. Currently, what programme is used to perform checks for Obsolete Machinery and Equipment?
29. Have any steps been taken to develop a well-defined programme to perform checks on Obsolete Equipment and Machinery?

Internal Audit

30. Provide a schedule of audits conducted throughout fiscal year 2017, highlight the high risk areas.
31. With the existence of only one Internal Audit Unit which oversees ten (10) Divisions, what problems have been encountered by the Department as a result of this?
32. Are the courses in ACCA and LIMA currently undertaken by the two (2) officers on staff part of the academic requirements for the position they currently hold?
33. It was stated that certain areas are not examined because of inadequacy of staff and lack of expertise in certain areas. Have steps been taken to rectify this situation?
34. What happens in the event of the unavailability of staff to execute audits?
35. Have any attempts been made to approach the Service Commission to acquire staff for the vacant positions in the unit?
36. State what are considered "source documents" which are used for the verification of documents.
37. Are steps being taken to address the reluctance of Divisions/Departments to provide the required documents needed to perform audits? Are there penalties for non-compliance?
38. How effective and useful has the current work programme been?
39. What is the status of the establishment of small Internal Audit Units in each Division as at March 31, 2017?
40. Has a complete Internal Work Plan been prepared for fiscal year 2017?
41. Has a new work plan been prepared post March 2017?
42. Explain the statement "at times there is a lack of respect shown to Internal Auditors"?
43. What advice would the Accounting Officer have for the Ministry of Finance when drafting an official Internal Audit definition?
44. Provide a copy of your Internal Audit Charter.

45. Provide clarification on the statement "generally there is compliance with the recommendations of the Internal Audit" as stated in your response.
46. Clarify what is the "life of the THA's Internal Audit Department".
47. What are the reasons for Internal Audit not being conducted during the life of the Internal Audit Department?
48. How is the Accounting Officer addressing the deficiencies in the oversight functions of the Department?
49. Is the Accounting Officer satisfied that all division have an appreciation for the importance of Internal Audit?

Accountability and Transparency

50. How does the Chief Administrator being the Accounting Officer for all Divisions oversee the accounts of these Divisions?
51. Is the responsibility of overseeing reports received from Divisional Accounting Officers delegated to other personnel? If yes, to whom? Are they suitably qualified?
52. State which Divisions have Monitoring and Evaluation Units and which do not.
53. What are the reporting requirements established by THA?
54. What is the process used by the Executive Council of the THA when re-allocating funding to meet its objectives?
55. Which projects are defined as "hard projects" as stated in your submission?
56. Has the process used to determine the impact of programmes, proven to be effective and successful? How is success quantified?
57. Are the feasibility studies conducted prior to the commencement of projects?
58. How is a determination made on whether to conduct a feasibility study or not?
59. How often are surveys and questionnaires conducted in communities?
60. How often are programmes and projects monitored to ensure value for money?
61. When was the last monitoring and evaluation activity carried out on programmes and projects carried out?
62. What is the status of the Internal Audit Unit and the Procurement Regime?
63. Are the systems in place to measure the functionality of the framework for accountability, transparency and value for money effective?
64. What is the status of the implementation of the following:
    - Computerisation of the Assembly's Payroll; and
    - Upgrade of the IT Infrastructure of the THA.
65. What are considered 'regular system audits'? How often are they conducted?
66. Has the strategy used to minimise underperformance and to reduce failure been effective/successful thus far? How is effectiveness/success determined?
67. Are all statements regarding the utilization of funds submitted in a timely manner? If no, are there penalties for this?
68. What instruction is given to individuals or groups granted financial assistance with regard to accounting for the sums received?

69. How has the Regulations and policy documents used to treat with the issue of conflict of interest by the THA proven to be effective? Is the THA's Accounting Officer satisfied with the measures in place?
70. Has there been any occurrence of conflicts of interest for the period 2015 – 2016? If yes, please state how the matters were dealt with?
71. How does the framework and the documents for treating with conflict of interest work together to detect conflict of interest by employees?
72. What is the current legal framework in place to treat with the occurrence of conflict of interest?

Sub Head 02 - Goods and Services

Division 02 - Office of the Chief Secretary

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

73. What is the total amount to be paid in arrears to the THA's employees?
74. How much of the allocation for Contract Employment will be utilised to pay outstanding gratuity payments?

Sub-Item: 22- Short-Term Employment

75. Provide the number of university graduates applicants accepted over the last 3 years.
76. Who oversees the supervision of these student employees? Are they treated as a regular, full-time employee?
77. How many vacant short-term positions are there currently? How many positions are expected to be filled by students for the 2017 August holiday period?
78. What are the areas of skill or expertise needed to be filled on short-term for fiscal year 2017? How many have been filled as at March 31st, 2017?

Sub-Item: 66-Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions

79. Provide a status update on the Shaw Park Complex.
80. Is the attendance and stakeholder feedback sufficient to guide the Division in assessing the success or failure of each seminar and conference?
81. Why are formal assessments not conducted on Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions? Are there plans to introduce formal assessments?
82. What is the informal assessment used to measure the success or failure of an event?
83. How does the Division determine if the intended purpose and aim of an event is achieved?
84. Due to the efforts of the Division, has there been any increase in the use of the Bucco Integrated Facility and the Shaw Park Complex?

Division 05 - Tourism and Transportation

- 002 Tourism

Sub-Item: 62 Promotions, Publicity and Printing

85. What constraints may arise as a result of the decrease of funds allocated to this sub-item?
86. How will the decrease in allocation affect the Communications and Marketing Unit?
87. Will measures be put in place to assist units in building internal capacity to manage and produce most material in-house while ensuring the quality and standards of the Division's message is preserved?
88. Does the Division have any plans/initiatives to target new markets in spite of the reduction in allocation? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?

Division 06 - Education, Youth Affairs and Sports
- 003 Library Services
Sub-Item 43- Security Services

89. In what ways will the decrease in allocation affect schools and offices of the Division?
90. What is the status of the establishment of the team to visit each school for the purpose of doing assessments on safety and security measures and how it can be improved? Provide details on this?
91. Why are service providers not benchmarked or evaluated against other providers? How are the service providers selected?

Division 07 - Community Development and Culture
Sub-item: 21 Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings

92. Does the Division plan to introduce the number of buildings scheduled to be repaired in 2017?
93. What training would be required for the Artisan Team going forward?
94. Are facilities checked at the required time?
95. How does the Division's Executive affect the list of issues compiled from reports?
96. How does the reports from the Artisan Team affect weekly reports from Facilities Officers?
97. What is the status of the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit?

Division 12 - Planning and Development
- 002 Planning
Sub-Item: 66-Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions

98. According to the Draft Estimates and Expenditure 2017, the allocation for sub-item 66 is in the sum of $20,000. Could the Division explain the breakdown stated in their written submission for fiscal year 2017?
99. In light of the current economic situation, has the Division considered decreasing the cost of events? Which events would be postponed or cancelled?
100. How are the costs of the new events determined? How will the costs be covered?

Sub-Head 03 -Minor Equipment Purchases
Division 06 – Education, Youth Affairs and Sports
- 002 Primary, Secondary and Vocational
Sub-item 03 Furniture and Furnishings

101. When last was an internal audit conducted into this Sub-item? What is the benefit of conducting internal audits and producing no reports?
102. Which schools will be receiving additional furniture and furnishings in fiscal year 2017?

Sub Head 04- Current Transfers and Subsidies

009 Other Transfers

18 Processing Company of Fishing Tobago (FIPCOT)

103. Was a feasibility study/cost benefit analysis conducted on the modern fish processing plant?
104. Has there been any interest from regional or international parties? If yes, state these parties.
105. Are there any plans for Public Private Partnerships? If yes, describe these plans. If no, why not?
106. Provide further details on the mandate given by the Executive Council.
107. Provide a status update on the procurement of two vessels for FIPCOT?
108. When will training commence under this sub-item?
109. What are the strict guidelines that outlines items of expenditure?
110. How often is the Chairman required to submit audited reports? When was the last report submitted?

Division 5 Tourism and Transportation

- 13 Rolling Three – Year Tourism Plan

111. Provide a list of the Airlines that receive subventions and the amount to each for the period 2016-2017.
112. When last was an internal audit conducted on the subventions to international airlines? What were the findings and recommendations?
113. How are the contracts between the THA and the international airlines monitored?
114. Have there been instances of breaches of contracts?
115. Is a separate cost incurred by the Division for having the International Airlines market flights?
116. When was the last internal audit on the books of the Division conducted? What recommendations were made to improve performance?
117. With regard to investigating fraud, how often are checks performed? Has there been any instances of fraud within the fiscal year 2016?
118. State which projects and programmes received virements/transfers from the allocation for the Rolling Three Year Tourism Plan.
119. How will the decrease in the allocation for this sub-item affect the execution of this project?

007 Households

02 Retirement, Severance Benefits and Compensation

120. State the control mechanisms established in the finance regulations which are followed to facilitate the oversight of funds under this Sub-item - Retirement, Severance Benefits and Compensation.
121. Is the Nutrition Unit the only Unit with systems in place to ensure effective compliance, proper management of assets and adequate performance? If yes, why? If no, state the other units.
122. How is fraud detected and investigated under this Sub-item - Retirement, Severance Benefits and Compensation?
123. Has there been any instances of fraud discovered under this sub-item over the last three (3) years?
124. How often are spot checks conducted with regard to this sub-item?

09 Early Childhood Care (ECCE)

125. What measures will be taken to overcome the challenges faced as a result of the decreased allocation?
126. How often do ECCE Coordinators visit schools? Are there sufficient ECCE Coordinators?
127. How are ECCE Boards reprimanded in instances where they are found to be improperly managing assets?
128. In what ways do the Boards appointed to oversee the twelve schools, prevent, detect and investigate fraud?
129. What systems are used for the detection of fraud?

Division 11 Settlements and Labour

<u>005 Non- Profit Organisations</u>

<u>02 Assistance to Cultural Groups</u>

<u>26 Assistance to Pan Group</u>

130. How long has the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit been established? What is the status of this Unit?
131. Provide details on the policy document developed for accessing funding under this sub-item - Non- Profit Organisations.
132. How often does the Financial Assistance Committee meet to deliberate on applications?
133. How many persons applied for funding in fiscal year 2016?
134. Who conducts these "covert and overt" investigations of applicants for funding? What do these investigations entail?
135. State the financial rules and regulations adhered to when processing funding applications.
136. What is the status of the establishment of the structured system to aid in the effective monitoring of the use of funds by entities? When will this system be completed?

137. Are there penalties for individuals or groups who fail to provide reports on how the funds are utilised? If yes, what are they? If no, why not?

09 Development Programme Consolidated Fund

11 Other Economic ServicesG. Business Services

003 Business Incubator Programme

138. Which businesses benefitted from Business Incubator Centers for fiscal year 2017to date?
139. Where are the Centres located? How are locations for new Centres identified?
140. Are all Centres at full occupancy?
141. What is done to attract business to these Centres?
142. What areas in Tobago have been identified for additional Micro Enterprise Centres?
143. Which Micro Enterprise Centres are going to benefit from infrastructural works?
144. Have infrastructural works began? What percentage of works has been completed to date?
145. What is the estimated cost of these infrastructural works?
146. When will the Cove Eco-Industrial Business Park Programme be launched?
147. When will the pilot project involving the "adoption" of 25 business be launched? How will this project be monitored?

APPENDIX III

Attendance

The following Committee Members were present at the meeting:

- Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George - Chairman
- Dr. Lackram Bodoe - Vice-Chairman
- Mr. Maxie Cuffie - Member
- Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy - Member
- Ms. Allyson Baksh - Member
- Mr. Daniel Dookie - Member
- Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir - Member

Witnesses who appeared:

Ministry of Education

- Mr. Raye Sandy - Chief Administrator
- Mrs. Claire Davidson-Williams - Administrator, Division of Finance and the Economy
- Ms. Esther Pilgrim-Soanes - Director of Finance
- Ms. Shelly Trim - Budget Analyst IV
- Ms. Petal-Ann Roberts - Senior Financial Analyst
- Mrs. Bernice Jack-Edwards - Accounting Executive I
- Mr. Allister Taylor - Chairman, Board of Survey
- Mr. Bobby Andrews - Planning Coordinator
- Ms. Cindy Hackett - Auditor III

APPENDIX IV

Verbatim

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE THIRteenth PUBLIC MEETING OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, HELD IN THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR, (IN PUBLIC), OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, THE PORT OF SPAIN INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 2017, AT 2.33 P.M.

PRESENT

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George Chairman

Dr. Lackram Bodoe Vice-Chairman

Mr. Maxie Cuffie Member

Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy Member

Miss Allyson Baksh Member

Mr. Daniel Dookie Member

Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir Member

Miss Sheranne Samuel Assistant Secretary

Miss Candice Skerrette Procedural Clerk

ABSENT

Mr. Clarence Rambharat Member

Mr. Wade Mark Member

Miss Nicole Olivierre Member

TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Mr. Raye Sandy Chief Administrator

Mrs. Claire Davidson-Williams Administrator, Division of Finance and the Economy

Ms. Esther Pilgrim-Soanes Director of Finance

Ms. Shelly Trim Budget Analyst IV

Ms. Petal-Ann Roberts Senior Financial Analyst

Mrs. Bernice Jack-Edwards Accounting Executive I

Mr. Allister Taylor Chairman, Board of Survey

Mr. Bobby Andrews Planning Coordinator

Ms. Cindy Hackett   Auditor III

Madam Chairman: Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the thirteenth public meeting of the Committee on Public Administration and Appropriations of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. The Committee on Public Administration and Appropriations has a mandate to consider and report to the House on:

(a) the budgetary expenditure of Government agencies to ensure that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval;

(b) the budgetary expenditure of Government agencies as it occurs and keeps Parliament informed of how the budget allocation is being implemented; and

(c) the administration of Government agencies to determine hindrances to their efficiency and to make recommendations to the Government for improvement of public administration.

The purpose of the thirteenth public meeting of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee for the Eleventh Parliament is to seek further information on the 2017 expenditure and internal controls of the Tobago House of Assembly as it pertains to the following: inventory control, internal audit, accountability and transparency, Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services, Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, Sub-Head 09 Development Programme, Consolidated Fund.

This meeting is being held in public and will be broadcast live on the Parliament's Channel 11, Radio 105.5 F.M. and the Parliament's YouTube Channel *ParlView*.

The Committee is desirous of hearing from the Chief Administrator and other key officials of the Tobago House of Assembly to discover the challenges being faced and determine possible solutions to these challenges. The role of the Committee is to assist the department to achieve efficient delivery of services while ensuring that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval. I, therefore, now invite the Tobago House of Assembly to introduce their members.

[*Introductions made*]

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much and I, therefore, now invite Members of the Committee to introduce themselves starting with my extreme right.

[*Introductions made*]

Madam Chairman: And I am Bridgid Annisette George, Chairman and we are ably assisted by our acting Assistant Secretary Miss Sheranne Samuel and by Committee Clerk, Miss Candice Skerrette. I, therefore, now will invite Mr. Sandy, as the Chief Administrator, to make an opening statement.

Mr. Sandy: Good afternoon, again, Madam Chairman and Members of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee. The team from the Tobago House of Assembly that is gathered here today was selected based on the areas identified for examination by the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee. The Tobago House of Assembly is a complex organization consisting of the Assembly Legislature, Office of the Chief Secretary and nine Divisions. Each with its own portfolio of responsibilities as defined in the Fifth

Schedule of the Tobago House of Assembly Act of 1996. Each Division of the Tobago House of Assembly operates similar to a Ministry in central Government with its accounting officer who, in the case of the THA, is an administrator and its semi-autonomous accounting, human resources, information technology and other units necessary for the efficient functioning of the Division.

In its current configuration, the Divisions of the Tobago House of Assembly are: the Division of Community Development, Enterprise Development and Labour; the Division of Infrastructure, Quarries and the Environment; the Division of Food Production, Forestry and Fisheries; the Division of Finance and the Economy; the Division of Settlements, Urban Renewal and Public Utilities; the Division of Health, Wellness and Family Services; the Division of Tourism, Culture and Transportation; the Division of Education, Innovation and Energy; and last but not least, the Division of Sports and Youth Affairs. Each Division is under the general direction and control of the Secretary who has been assigned to that Division, and as the most senior public servant of the Tobago House of Assembly, the Chief Administrator exercises general administrative oversight over all Divisions.

I emphasize this fact to indicate that when a team such as this appears before this august Committee, our knowledge of the specific operations of the Tobago House of Assembly may not be as comprehensive as our knowledge of our specific operations in the Divisions from which we came and for which we are intimately familiar. The team before you today is knowledgeable and cedes of information relevant to today's examination as we have a very good grasp of the operations of the various Divisions of the Tobago House of Assembly. We have gathered as much information as we could in the areas identified for this hearing. We will respond to your questions with the information that we have researched, and if our responses are not adequate or do not meet with the standards or specificity that you require, if necessary, we will willingly provide the detailed information that you require via a written response, perhaps at a later date.

Another significant departure from what is the practice in the Ministries and in central Government is the way parliamentary allocations are treated with at the Tobago House of Assembly. More often than not, after the national budget is read, the Executive Council of the Tobago House of Assembly reallocates resources in accordance with the THA's priorities, bearing in mind that the Tobago House of Assembly, by law, would have submitted its budgetary request to the Ministry of Finance in June preceding the passage of the national budget. The eventual allocation to the various Divisions of the Tobago House of Assembly sometimes vary from the parliamentary allocations, especially in the Public Sector Investment Programme.

I brought these two issues to the fore so that an appreciation of the difficulties that we, as members of the administration of the Tobago House of Assembly, face at the PAC in the circumstances when the THA appears, in our respectful view, to be treated similar to a Ministry of central Government. As we participate in this important exercise, our hope is that we provide you with all the information that you require as you continue to provide oversight of the activities of the various arms of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. That is my opening statement, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Sandy. And leading off from your introductory statement, you listed the various Divisions which you say are autonomous

Divisions and you identified them. I want to ask, if prior to the new Council coming into being, if those were the very said Divisions or if there has been a realignment of Divisions since?

Mr. Sandy: There has been a realignment of Divisions. Some major, some minor but there had been a realignment.

Madam Chairman: Let us just focus on the major. In terms of the major realignment, having regard to the fact that you had indicated that these Divisions are all autonomous, I guess they all have their budgets and so. How has that impacted on the operations of the Assembly and of the various Divisions?

Mr. Sandy: Well, it is a little difficult administratively in the sense that—let us say—give you an example. Prior to the realignment, we had a Division of Community Development and Culture and with the realignment, Culture has been moved to the tourism unit so it is now Tourism and Culture. So the allocations for the Culture part of that Division still remain with that Division. So even though they are now separated, we still have to administratively treat them as though they were still together. And we are hoping that—not hoping but we are expecting that in September or October, when the new budget is read, the new Divisions or the realigned Divisions would have their budgets in accordance with the realignment. So currently we are straddling.

Madam Chairman: And therefore, could you give us some practical challenges that would result for your various administrators and also for you, as Chief Administrator, coming out of this realignment.

Mr. Sandy: Well, okay. As Chief Administrator and the administrator for the Office of the Chief Secretary, before the alignment, I had the unit of Occupational Safety and Health. With the realignment, Occupational Safety and Health has now gone to Community Development, Enterprise Development and Labour. We try to mimic nationally where OSHA was. OSHA is with the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development here so we have placed the OSHA department with the Division of department of labour.

The administrative difficulties I have is the budget for OSHA is with me and administratively they are not with me. So they have to apply for, for example, as we speak, this afternoon, they are having their annual awards and they had to come to me basically for funding for the preparation and so on of these awards. That is just one area of—

Madam Chairman: And therefore, have any systems, mechanisms, been put in place? Because I am sure there are—certain inefficiencies would result. Have you identified any mechanisms to bridge those difficulties in the short term?

Mr. Sandy: Well yes, in the sense that I have appealed to administrators who have overall responsibility for accounting for these units to try to accommodate those units that used to be associated with that Division and are no longer with them. So we try our best to accommodate the request for goods and services from those units as though they were still with us. Even though we know that administratively, we have no administrative control over them. So it is a give and take, and we understand that it is going to last perhaps as long as up to September until the end of the financial year and then with the new financial year, we will have that whole situation sorted out.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, Chief Administrator, has the realignment posed any challenges for auditing?

Mr. Sandy: Can I ask the Auditor to please respond to that?

Ms. Hackett: No, Mrs. Roy. It has not posed any challenges. Since all the vote books, all the accounting is done at the previous Divisions, we would audit as usual. Because all the vouchers, everything would go at the previous Division.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: When was the last audit taken?

Ms. Hackett: It depends on what kind of audit. We do various audits. Right now, we are doing examination of vote books at the various Divisions of the THA. So at present, we are doing vote book examinations.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Is there a risk register?

Ms. Hackett: Not to my knowledge, Mrs. Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Are there plans to establish one?

Ms. Hackett: Can you repeat the question, please?

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Are there plans to establish a risk register?

Ms. Hackett: Madam member, the risk register is—to my knowledge, we should be doing risk-based auditing but the Division is supposed to do risk register so that we can audit and to my knowledge, there is no risk register at the Divisions.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Have you, as Auditor, made a recommendation?

Ms. Hackett: I would have done that when we had the previous administrator, Dr. Ellis Burris and he would have sent memos to the various Divisions to create one but to date, we have not had any.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: The former Chief Administrator would have left quite a while ago and no one implemented that recommendation which is quite crucial. What plans or what steps would you take to ensure that that recommendation is adhered to?

Mr. Sandy: Well, quite frankly, I was not aware of a specific recommendation. Dr. Burris would have left office—last week would have made it exactly three years since I am Chief Administrator in Tobago and I was not aware of that specific recommendation but certainly, now that I have been made aware, I will certainly ensure that we proceed along those lines.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you.

Mr. Dookie: Thank you, Madam Chair. With regard to these changes, some of which the Chief Administrator described as minor and some as major, how have these changes affected your overall issue of staffing?

Mr. Sandy: The staffing issue has not changed much in the sense that the units have moved with their staff, so to speak. There was the creation of a new Division, the Division of Sports and Youth Affairs. It used to be Education, Youth Affairs and Sport and that was split into two Divisions. So we have a new Division of Sports and Youth Affairs and that Division operates as a Division but without the necessary support in terms of accounting and so on. So that is something that we will have to treat with in the future from September. They still share accounts with the old education Division.

But I am aware, when I used to be Permanent Secretary in Trinidad, that a number of Ministries used to share some of these kinds of arrangements. I remember when I was at science and tech and then we had tertiary education and so on, we had them sharing accounting units and so on, so it is not unusual for that to happen. In fact, it might be more cost-effective depending on the size of the Division and so on. So all of these are challenges that we would have to treat with as we move closer to October.

Mr. Dookie: And any major issues regarding accommodation? How are the staff housed as they move?

Mr. Sandy: Yes, we have some challenges there and we are seeking to treat with those challenges.

Mr. Dookie: With success?

Mr. Sandy: Not with much success so far. The same challenge we have with Sports and Youth Affairs, they are still sharing the same premises, the same building and so on. But we are working towards treating with those issues.

Mr. Dookie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Sandy, I understand that but could you tell us, with the difficulties and the challenges you have identified, it seems that the new fiscal year is your sort of benchmark for the changes. Could you tell us and maybe you need to put it in writing, as far as the active steps that have been taken to ensure that come the new fiscal year, there would be a complete realignment in terms of the administrative responsibilities, the staffing, the accommodation for the new units? What active steps are being taken to ensure that that will happen by fiscal 2017/2018?

Mr. Sandy: I can speak to the issue of accommodation and so on and I know that we are actively looking around within the Tobago House of Assembly to find adequate accommodation. We have the situation at our now famous Administrative Complex and three or four of our Divisions are supposed to be moving in there—I almost said hopefully. They should be moving in there sometime in the next two to three months. A contract is about to be awarded for outfitting of that building. So with that eventuality, we should have some additional accommodation to treat with the realignment and so on. So I do not see that as a major challenge.

In terms of the accounting part of it, I can ask perhaps the Senior Financial Analyst or the Director of Finance to treat with the issue of the new budget lines and so on. Director, could you addressed that?

Mrs. Pilgrim-Soanes: Good afternoon. We have an issue with the bank right now where the bank is not recognizing our new names, so we have to put it in writing for them and we needed approval from the Executive Council to adopt the new names. I understand that would have been done this week and then moving forward, we will inform the bank. Because we need to get new cheque books, we need to get the new names on the accounts, and then it may impact on the financial statements, so hence the reason it was easier to move forward at 30th September with the existing structure and then adopt the new structure from 1st October. Right, so that we would not have to prepare two financial statements. So there is where—

Madam Chairman: So in terms of what is the reality is not really being reflected in what you do. Now, how long ago the new divisions would have been created?

Mrs. Pilgrim-Soanes: The election was the 23rd of January so at the election, those new—[*Interruption*] The 26th was when the instruments—the Secretaries would have gotten instruments for their new Divisions. At that point in time, we were not familiar with the impact that will happen, whereas certain units under certain Divisions will be moving. As the Chief Administrator said just now, with the moving of some of the units and we are now having to account for payments at the existing Division, we have—well, treating it that way would have mitigated any further or any problems going forward. So it was decided that we will move forward just as we are doing now and then at the end of the fiscal, then we will make changes.

Madam Chairman: With the way you are operating, would that be in accordance with the Financial Regulations that govern you?

Mrs. Pilgrim-Soanes: Well, we are making the payments under the existing—how Parliament approve. The payments are being made how Parliament approve because we do not have any other—we have not made the changes. Right? So Parliament approve, as Chief said, under one Division, we would have had different Heads and Sub-Heads, Sub-Items, but when you move out a unit to a different Division and you come back now, you are making the payment under the existing Division because we do not have any Parliament approval to make the changes. Right, so based on that, I will say what we are working with now is within the regulations.

Madam Chairman: Based on those inconsistencies, are there going to be any sort of accounting challenges that will, say, permit incorrect entries, possible problems in the reconciling what is the fact from the fiction?

Mrs. Pilgrim-Soanes: Yes, Chair, we anticipate that there will be but we have accounting monitoring officers who go out on a daily basis to reconcile with the other Divisions.

Madam Chairman: And that would be fed into—

Mrs. Pilgrim-Soanes: Into the financial statements.

Madam Chairman: All right. So let me just for a moment, because the initial statement has really sent us in various directions and I do remember the Chief Administrator telling us that the team here has come specifically to answer the remit. But if you will just permit me, again coming from the initial statement of the Chief Administrator with respect to the reallocation by the THA of the allocation by the Parliament. So I get the impression—and you will correct me—that one, there is a certain approval by the Parliament of your allocation and then there is, according to the words of the Chief Administrator, a reassignment by the Tobago House of Assembly in accordance with its priorities. Might I ask, what is the authority for that?

Mr. Sandy: The way I understand it is that the Executive Council of Tobago House of Assembly sort of mimics the Cabinet here. They have the authority to make those kinds of decisions. I know that there has always been a debate about whether or not the Tobago House of Assembly should come back to Parliament when those changes are made and so on but I am not going to get involved in that. But I know that the Executive Council makes those decisions and we abide by those decisions made by the Executive Council.

Madam Chairman: And how is that effected? By virements? By what? How is that effected?

Mr. Sandy: By transfer of funds.

Madam Chairman: Might I ask just one other general question. For the Assembly, are your submissions of your audited financial statements and your administrative reports to the Parliament up to date?

Ms. Roberts: Madam Chair, in terms of our audited reports, the Auditor General has completed the audit of 2015. So the Auditor General—the last audit was 2015. They ran 2015 and 2009 concurrently so that they can try to fill that gap. We have received the management letter for 2015 but we have not received for 2009. We are in the process of responding to 2015 at present. That should be completed by the end of the month and we are awaiting the Auditor General's Report for 2009. So we have laid all financial statements up to 2015.

3.00 p.m.

Madam Chairman: And as far as the administrative reports?

Ms. Roberts: I cannot speak to that. I am sorry.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Yes, Madam Chair, our administrative reports are submitted on an annual basis.

Madam Chairman: So that your last submission would have been for when?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: 2016.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Member Dookie, I think we can now go into inventory control. I would ask you if you want to lead off the discussion.

Mr. Dookie: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. In your submission, you stated that the inventory register is checked occasionally, could you explain what "occasionally" means in your practice, in your reality?

Ms. Hackett: We try to check the inventory, if you are speaking about the fixed assets, we try to check it at least once per financial year because of the fact that we have 10 divisions to check and other audits to be done; we try to do it at least once per year.

Dr. Bodoe: And once per year, have you found that to be working? Have you found that to be delivering the kind of results that you want?

Ms. Hackett: No, Sir.

Mr. Dookie: How do you propose to address that?

Ms. Hackett: I would have brought it to the attention of the Chief Administrator, who is the accounting officer, that we would need to get more staff in order to be for effective in our duties.

Mr. Dookie: All right. In terms of your tagging function and, again, dealing with inventory control and inventory management: what are the reasons for all items not being tagged? What are the specific reasons for that occurrence?

Mr. Sandy: I must admit that the asset registers of the Tobago House of Assembly are not where they should be. Currently, we are engaged in discussions with a supplier of a Web-based system to assist us with asset management. A Note is before the Executive Council to engage that supplier.

The specific question you asked about the tagging, I really have no good answer for that, in the sense that we have tagged some pieces of the assets and some just have not been tagged. We are very, I should say, deficient in a general sense with respect to inventory of our assets.

Mr. Dookie: And you mentioned the Web-based solution—how would that address some of these shortcomings we are identifying?

Mr. Sandy: Well, one, we will be using the technology that is available to us now where we can tag some of the items electronically, and we will have not only an electronic tag, but we will be able to identify wherever they are within the system.

Part of the challenge we have in the public service is we tag items and persons can move items, except for very large items, from room to room, division to division and so on, and it really makes it extremely difficult to keep a tag or to keep an account of every piece of equipment or item that belongs to the Tobago House of Assembly. Recognizing that, we explored and our advice is that the Web-based system is a good system to treat with that particular problem.

Mr. Dookie: So you are confident that the Web-based system will deal with that?

Mr. Sandy: Yes, I am confident of that.

Madam Chairman: Member Cuffie. Sorry. May I just ask member Cuffie?

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you, Madam Chair. Chief Administrator, I just wanted to delve more deeply into the issue of the inventory. Now, you say in some divisions, departments, registers have not been kept. I was trying to ascertain from your response whether it is a problem of delinquent individuals or people who are not properly trained or whether there are divisions or departments where it is not being done—whether it is based on individuals or based on divisions or departments?

Mr. Sandy: I would say it is a combination of all of the above, in the sense that one of the challenges we face in the public service is frequent movement of persons. In the system that we operate, we do not have an individual, an office that is called Property Manager or something like that. So in our system we use administrative officers of some persons in accounts as the custodian of the registers, and frequent movement of those persons together with—what I should say?—not enough focus on that particular area causes us to lapse at times. So it is a real challenge and it is something we are trying to deal with.

Mr. Cuffie: Okay. I just want to stick a little bit here. Now, you mentioned that you are looking at a Web-based solution—now, how was this procured? Because there are several Ministries, departments and agencies who have similar problems. Did you check iGov, or was there any consideration or consultation with other Ministries, divisions and agencies in terms of looking at the best Web-based solution for your needs? How did you go about it? What was the procurement process?

Mr. Sandy: When I joined the Tobago House of Assembly three years ago, this process had already started with the same provider. Soon after I went into office, a pilot project was done and we continued with that process. In terms of procurement of the provider, I really cannot speak to that because the provider was procured before I went on board. I do not know if any member of staff here has more information than I have on that.

Ms. Pilgrim-Soanes: Chair, members, the information that I got with respect to the procurement is that two suppliers were evaluated. One did not meet the need of the Assembly and the other supplier was accepted. There was no tender process because it was within the limits of the then Chief Administrator.

Dr. Mahabir: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just for clarification. When I visit some supermarkets and some clothing stores, I see they tag a simple bottle of alcohol that you cannot really take out of the store unless you have paid for it and it has been removed by the cashier. This is not Web-based, this is an electronic tag that is placed on very small items. Is it that you have considered such a procedure as opposed to the more advanced Web-based? What is the feasibility or the practicability of putting some of the tags on your computers and so on, or is it that you have not considered this supermarket/clothing store model in the THA?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Member, the Web-based TMA is but a product and will certainly, based on what we have seen, will operate in that similar fashion. Web-based, just meaning that it will employ the computer technology that will put the different items onto the system electronically.

Currently, the registers would require you writing the serial numbers, getting the information. When we use the technology it will then capture the information from a barcode similar to what you are speaking about.

Dr. Mahabir: When can we expect this technology to be implemented by the THA?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: There is a Note before the Executive Council that will give us the authority to finally engage but, however, as the Chief Administrator said, there was a pilot system engaged at the Office of the Chief Secretary that showed that they seemed to be working well.

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you, Madam Chair. Chief Administrator, how long have you been at the THA?

Mr. Sandy: Three years last week.

Mr. Cuffie: Three years. And you said when you came you met the system being deployed, so it has not completed deployment in three years?

Mr. Sandy: Three years ago when I joined, they were about to start the pilot project. The pilot project worked for about a year. We evaluated it and it took some time. And as I said, we are now in the process of doing the final engagement of the provider. It took us some time in negotiating the financial terms, and that is what is before the Executive Council now for approval.

Mr. Cuffie: Now, I have heard from other agencies here that the problem with using a Web-based solution is that sometimes those solutions need to work with the normal register. So it is not a replacement. How do you ensure that you observe all the requirements of the law in terms of the Exchequer and Audit Act and all the facts that apply to the Office of the Chief Administrator while you work toward Web-based or you maintain a register because you need to have an actual register according to the law?

Mr. Sandy: Member, my understanding of it is that the Web-based system can be queried to produce those records that are required under the Audit and Exchequer Act. That would be a part of the system. So we will have, for want of a better word, a hard copy of the assets coming out of that system.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, I just want to ask, in the meantime, Mr. Sandy, one, the Web-based seems to be the solution, and you have a Note before your Executive Council. Have the funds been identified and allocated for this Web-based system?

Mr. Sandy: The funds have not yet been allocated, but I believe that the Executive Council will identify the funds.

Madam Chairman: So the point about it is, as we speak, we are not sure when we would institute the Web-based, even though we understand it is desirable, ASAP?

Mr. Sandy: Madam Chair, I am fairly confident that the Tobago House of Assembly will approve the request that we have made to them.

Madam Chairman: All right. So let me ask you something. In terms of getting to the Web-based, as we speak now, I just wanted to look at your inventory control procedure where you say that there are stock cards in each of the various divisions and you capture specific data. So your stock cards show disbursements, they show receipts and you have set out what they show. Is there any provision for signing-off by the person who has authorized the disbursement or signing by the person who has received the item?

Ms. Hackett: Madam Chair, if we are speaking about inventory as it relates to stock, yes there is that system where you would buy stock, the stock keeper would issue stock where people would have to sign because you have to do in-house requisition. But in the case, if you are speaking about assets like desks and computers, they have different sections that are responsible for buying these items and issuing them to the various sections and they would keep note of them.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. But in the submission and when you had set out the specific data, there is no way in any of the stock cards you have referred to that there is any sort of signing-off by any individual, so that in doing your audit you can say, well, yes this item was received by so and so or the disbursement was authorized by so and so. What I am trying to find out is, is that factual or it might have been an omission in your submission?

Ms. Hackett: Madam Chair, I think in the submission, they would have thought that the question that they were asking about were the fixed asset. But in the case of where you buy stocks as it relates to books, pens and stuff, we do have a system where the divisions would do in-house requisition which must be signed by the head of that department in order to get stock.

Madam Chairman: So under the head for materials, that would be the stock we are talking about or that would be desks?

Ms. Hackett: Can you repeat, Madam Chair?

Madam Chairman: You are making a distinction between stock and between furniture and you are saying that as far as the submission was concerned, apparently the focus may have been on furniture.

Ms. Hackett: Right, which is Minor equipment.

Madam Chairman: Minor Equipment. And in the submission, my recollection is that they referred to materials and, therefore, I was wondering whether the explanation of stock—because I would think stock cards were not talking about furniture. I may be wrong. So what I am speaking about, the questioning comes from the submission regarding stock cards.

Ms. Hackett: Okay, well we do in fact have stock cards. The Storekeepers do, in fact, have stock cards. They would record stocks. For persons to get stocks from the stores they must submit requisitions—they would issue and then they would update the stock cards. We do stores audit to verify that these procedures are followed.

Madam Chairman: And for the purposes of you doing the audit, would the stock cards reflect who received or to whom it was disbursed or to what project or for what purpose?—on the stock cards, because that is what is going to inform your audit.

Ms. Hackett: Not in all circumstances.

Madam Chairman: And in the circumstances that it is not, is it an omission or is there a definite determination that this information would not be captured in certain circumstances for certain reasons?

Ms. Hackett: I think how some of the stock cards are made up, it is not entered, but in order for us to verify the amount that were issued and the date, we would look at the copy, because they keep a copy of the requisition that was submitted in order to get the item.

Madam Chairman: Would the fact that it is not on the stock card, would that present any challenge for your work as an auditor?

Ms. Hackett: Sometimes it does.

Madam Chairman: Would the recommendation have been made that the information should be captured on the stock cards?

Ms. Hackett: Yes, we would make the recommendation that enough information be placed on it so that we could identify.

Madam Chairman: Have you seen any sort of implementation of a recommendation such as that?

Ms. Hackett: 50 per cent of the times there is implementation.

Madam Chairman: And, therefore, would there be some sort of inconsistency with a submission that said that where internal audit makes a recommendation these recommendations are implemented?

Ms. Hackett: Yes, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Therefore, the conclusion is that in not all cases would be the recommendations be implemented?

Ms. Hackett: Yes, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. I want to ask one other thing for the vehicles. I saw that there is a register for vehicles and then there is depreciation as something that is recorded in the register. Am I correct?

Ms. Hackett: The vehicle register that we would have examined, we do not see; they keep a book. There is nothing as it relates to a register as it relates to the value of the vehicle and the depreciation in it. The book that we would check when we are doing vehicle control would have the vehicle number and all the particulars relating to the vehicle.

Madam Chairman: And does it deal with depreciation, because that is what is there in the submission? And really, what I want to get to is who determines depreciation? How is that assessed?

Ms. Hackett: There is a policy for the THA as it relates to the depreciation of the asset. Madam Director of Finance can speak to that, please.

Ms. Pilgrim-Soanes: Chair, we have a policy, the Operation of the Fixed Asset Register Policy Manual, but in our financial statement we do not depreciate and that is a problem. Although we have the inventory, but in some divisions it does not always translate into a fixed asset register as required by the Auditor General, because the fixed asset register will have unique features. So it will have the cost of the asset, the depreciation and I think that is what is mentioned here as opposed to the inventory register that depreciation is really not required in an inventory register, but yes we have problems. We are trying to treat with them, coming on with the asset management system to also incorporate the fixed asset register module in order so that we could depreciate our assets including the vehicles.

Madam Chairman: In the absence of your Web-based solution, what steps are being taken to treat with the deficiencies?

Ms. Pilgrim-Soanes: The information that is required has to be included in the financial statement. So we have records. There are records, it is just not in a fashion or, as the Auditor General will request or prefer, I should say, but there are records, because we have to reconcile the purchases with the information going into the financial statement. But the whole preparation of the fixed asset register as it relates to the cost, the depreciation, the netbook value, we have some deficiencies in that area.

Madam Chairman: And, therefore, you expect those deficiencies to be treated with by the commencement of fiscal 2017/2018?

Ms. Pilgrim-Soanes: It is a work in progress, Madam Chair. In fact, we have a forum of senior accounting officers within the Assembly that meet monthly. We did a template, sent it out to all the divisions to capture the information to be included in the fixed asset register.

Madam Chairman: I understand it is a work in progress, but every progress has an end. I am trying to get some sort of time frame in which we could see that this has been remedied with or without the Web-based solution. That is really where I am trying to get at, some commitment in terms of time.

Mr. Sandy: Madam Chair, I would want to make a commitment that by the end of this fiscal year all of our registers and so on will be up to date. In fact, the plan is during the August holidays when we take on a few university students during that period, our intention is to utilize them to assist us in bringing all our asset registers up to date. So that by September of this year we should not have that recurring problem.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. Chief Administrator, I am looking here at the policy for the acquisition of motor vehicles and the disposal of obsolete units. In light of the proposed proclamation of the procurement legislation, I note that your submission speaks to a comprehensive re-engineering programme. I am wondering if you can give us some further details as to what this would entail.

Mr. Sandy: Okay. We have taken on board the proposed procurement legislation. We have gone as far as to go to Executive Council and have them approve structures for the various divisions as far as procurement is concerned. So we have had that. We have actually done some advertising of the positions and we have interviewed some persons. So I would say within the next month to six weeks our procurement units should be up and running in accordance with the proposed new legislation.

In fact, only yesterday I attended a meeting with the hon. Minister of Finance basically appealing to, not appealing, but giving instructions to the various Ministries—and I attended as Chief Administrator of the THA—to put their houses in order because pretty soon that legislation should be proclaimed and so on. So we are readying ourselves for that.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you. Just one more. I also wanted to get some further information regarding your three-quote system, Chief Administrator, which is used by the department for selecting suppliers. Can you tell us how it operates and whether it has been effective?

Mr. Sandy: Okay. Generally, the three-quote system is like this. You need to procure some goods or services, you would determine what the goods and services are. Let me say with a good, you want to purchase some materials, for example, you will list the material. If they are, let us say, material from a hardware, you will list the materials. You will send that list to at least three to five bona fide hardwares in Tobago, for example and have them submit quotes. Those quotes would be submitted in a sealed envelope to a particular officer at a particular time. Those envelopes would be opened and usually the lowest quote is selected for the supply of the material. That is in a general sense how the three-quote system works. We say a minimum of three quotes. The more the merrier, but usually you get between three and five quotes.

Dr. Bodoe: Based on your answer, are you satisfied then that the system is free of bias and is transparent?

Mr. Sandy: If implemented properly, it is fairly safe to use in that it eliminates a lot of the bias and so on rather than if you go out and just purchase from one individual for example. So we insist on having bona fide business outfits who usually at the beginning of every financial year, we would ask them to indicate their interest in being on a list of suppliers for the Tobago House of Assembly.

Dr. Bodoe: One further question. What would be the reasons for your preference in using this system as opposed to the tendering process as through the Central Tenders Board?

Mr. Sandy: We use the Central Tenders Board for tenders beyond a million dollars; that is, if it costs more than a million dollars. Under a million dollars we use an in-house tendering process, but the three-quote system is usually for small amounts of items. If it is in the three-figure range, we normally go out for tender. The three-quote system does not prevent us from going out for tenders. The three-quote system is really for small items.

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you, Madam Chair. Now, I understand with the three-quote system you are supposed to have a prequalified list from which you draw the three quotes. Do you have a prequalified list in the THA?

Mr. Sandy: Again, the Tobago House of Assembly does not have a prequalifying list, but each division of the Tobago House of Assembly would have their varying list.

Mr. Cuffie: I just wanted to get some more information on the preparation for the onset of the Procurement Act. You said that the Assembly has drafted its own list in terms of the configuration of the procurement entities. Does that differ from what is being done in Trinidad?

Mr. Sandy: Yes it differs slightly, in the sense that we would have gone ahead of the Cabinet in this regard in that we went to Exec Council—let me back up a bit. Our MSU, our Management Services Unit, they would have evaluated and determined what kind of structure is required to perform the procurement functions in the various divisions, and they would have recommended a certain staff architecture. We would have gone with that to the Executive Council and got approval for it. After we have gotten that approval the Cabinet decision came out. So we have looked at the Cabinet decision and recognized that there was some lil tweaking to be done, so we are in that process now.

Coming out of the meeting yesterday, where the Minister appealed to us to keep the units very, very lean and mean—given the need not to expand the public service—it is something that we have taken on board. In fact, only this morning we had some discussions on that. So we will take a look at what was approved by the Executive Council to see if it meets those instructions, so to speak, and we would operate accordingly, but our intention is to have in place the procurement units that are adequately staffed to do the procurement in accordance with the new Act but, at the same time, staffed in such a way that it will not burden the national Treasury in terms of additional persons to be paid and so on. We recognize that.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Cuffie: I understand that but that is the next question I was going to ask, because it was also emphasized that you should, in terms of the setting up of the unit, use, as much as possible, existing officers. But you mentioned earlier that you might be going out for recruiting, so how do you gel the two?

Mr. Sandy: No, in fact, for our divisions, whether we want to call it procurement or not we had persons dealing with procurement all the time. So with the new procurement legislation we went internally. We identified those persons who are qualified and trained, and those persons who have the potential to be qualified and trained. In fact, I was rather surprised, when we did the internal advertisement for procurement officers and buyers, shoppers, and so on, we got a huge number of applicants. We had persons who were on contracts as BOA Is who have MBAs who applied. So we thought that we had a treasure trove of resources that we can use, and, I mean, while the procurement provision might not want to agree with me, I mean, the procurement function in the public service, it is not really rocket science, persons can be trained to do that. So we have engaged those persons who we feel have the necessary background, meaning a first degree in management, or accounts, or economics, or something like that, and those are the persons that we are targeting to move into our procurement units. So the functions that they now perform in the wider THA, quote-unquote, "public service", would have to be performed by somebody else if we select those persons.

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you. Madam Chair, just one final question. So let me just get you correctly, the advertisements that have gone out have gone out internal, not externally?

Mr. Sandy: For the procurement units in the various divisions, but there is also—we have what is called a procurement—we have a Procurement Oversight Unit with about four or five officers, who the intention is to have those to kind of supervise the entire procurement function in the Tobago House of Assembly. For those units we went out nationally, and we had some very good applicants there also too.

Madam Chairman: Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Chair. Chief Administrator, just to clear up for me, please, so we are going to have a central procurement unit that would do oversight of the sub-units in the different divisions?

Mr. Sandy: Yes, that is the current thinking, and that was what was approved by the Executive Council.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay. Is that in line with what was discussed at the meeting yesterday?

Mr. Sandy: More or less in line with what was discussed. The only thing that was discussed yesterday is that—well, I should not say the only thing, but what I went away with yesterday was the need to really take a critical look at our numbers to see if we are not going beyond what is really absolutely necessary given the financial circumstances in the country right now.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Madam Chair, one more question. Chief Administrator, taking into consideration that some of the divisions may be quite small in the THA, do you think it is feasible for small divisions to have individual procurement units, or for maybe small divisions to merge and share the function?

Mr. Sandy: That is a discussion that we are having right now, given what transpired yesterday.

Madam Chairman: Member Mahabir.

Dr. Mahabir: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Again, on the same vein of maximizing resources, this time not of personal use but rather the goods and services that you acquire, you did indicate in your submission that there are clear guidelines for the disposal of obsolete equipment, but obsolescence is a function of maintenance, and insofar as we are really experiencing stringent financial difficulties in Trinidad and Tobago, I would like to know what measures are being put in place to ensure that the goods and services that you do procure, via the Central Tenders Board, new procurement regulations, or the three-quote system, that those goods and services, those goods, really, are going to be maintained so that you can extend the life of them. Because we have had submissions from other agencies indicating that they have had vehicles properly maintained 15 and 16 years old, do you have a similar policy in the THA to extend the life of your durable assets?

Mr. Sandy: Yes, we do, and, I think, perhaps some of the oldest vehicles in the public service are now at the Tobago House of Assembly.

Mr. Mahabir: What is the average age?

Mr. Sandy: We have some vehicles that are, I mean, I am guessing here, maybe eight, 10, 12 years old. In fact, we were thinking that we need to change them because of the cost of maintenance. In fact, the vehicle that the Chief Secretary—the official vehicle for the Chief Secretary, it is over, I think, five years old, and we are giving serious consideration to changing that vehicle because it started creating some maintenance challenges for us.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Sandy, in terms of, again, in your submission you spoke about a comprehensive re-engineering programme in terms of treating with procurement and disposal in the light of the procurement legislation, I have not heard that terminology here today and, therefore, I wanted to find out what is this comprehensive re-engineering programme, if what you have described is facets of it, if maybe you could just elucidate.

Mr. Sandy: Yes, what I described is facets of it. In fact, the UNDP, who are assisting the Government of Trinidad and Tobago with the procurement legislation, they came to Tobago and they were pleasantly surprised at the progress that we had made with regard to the public procurement function. And they have actually used the Tobago House of Assembly—well, they had planned to use, I should say, and indicated that they would use us as a model and test case throughout their operations when they do procurement, because, you know, they do procurement not just in Trinidad and Tobago, they are consultants and they work all over the world. Because they had found that we had grabbed the ball and we had really ran with it, and that we were way advanced of the national effort in terms of putting the procurement unit in place. In fact, at a meeting of Permanent Secretaries, at a Permanent Secretaries' Board meeting, when they tendered the job descriptions for procurement officers, and so on, I thought that ours was far superior, and I took our job descriptions and passed it on to the Office of the Prime Minister, and I believe that was used skilfully by that office. So that is the re-engineering that we are talking about.

Madam Chairman: The new unit?

Mr. Sandy: The new unit, yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I really want to look at a bit now, maybe at the internal audit function as set out in the submissions and, therefore, I would like to know to start with, in the written submissions the accounting officer had said he was satisfied with the output of this unit, however there was another statement saying that the unit was inadequately staffed, and I really was interested to see how these two statements are reconciled.

Mr. Sandy: We were satisfied with the work that the limited staff was doing, but we recognize that the staffing is inadequate. In fact, we have gone so far as to go to the Executive Council with a—in fact, they have approved it; they have approved the hiring on contract of some audit assistants for the various divisions of the Tobago House of Assembly. We have advertised within the THA, given the need for us to rationalize some staff that we have, and we have received a number of applicants and the HR department of the Office of the Chief Secretary is working towards filling those contracted positions based on the persons who responded to the advertisement. So sooner rather than later, I would say within the next two months or so, the staffing at the audit unit should be improved quite a bit. The plan is to have—each division should have a small, either one or two persons, depending on the complexity of the division, to do their mundane routine daily audits, and the audit unit, of which Ms. Hackett here is the Head, will treat with more system, and system audit, and risk audits, and so on. So the day-to-day checking of pay sheets, and so on, would be done by the internal audit unit that are to be implanted in each division of one or two persons.

Madam Chairman: And how would you then—so I see you are getting the manpower, you had identified before an issue of training within audit. In fact, your statement says that:

Periodical training to ensure compliance with updated international standards for the professional practice of internal auditing has not been made available to the staff thus far.

So you would be getting more staff. Are there any plans to treat with training of staff that you currently have and with the staff you are going to employ to ensure that they keep abreast with the international standards?

Mr. Sandy: Yes, Madam Chair, the intention is to train the audit assistants that we are about to engage, and those who are current within the system to bring them up to a certain level so that they can perform the audit function, quote-unquote, "properly". The other senior officers, like Ms. Hackett here, they have been benefiting from some training, some ad hoc training done by the Public Service Academy. Ms. Hackett can speak to the kind of training that they are exposed to, and Ms. Hackett—I almost want to say pesters me, but I would not use that word, it is not parliamentary here, but Ms. Hackett does request from me, funding for opportunities for training, and Ms. Hackett can speak to that.

Ms. Hackett: Yes, Madam Chair, we would have, in my initiative, in order to bring staff to a higher level, as it regards auditing, would have engaged the University of the West Indies where we would have done a certificate in internal audit, as well as, as Mr. Sandy said, we would have put proposal to do a certificate in forensic accounting, because of the fact when we do some systems audit in order to analyse some of the vouchers that we are seeing, that we are able to do that as well. With regard to the public administration, most of the training is done in Trinidad, and most times we are unable to go to the training because of the fact that they would require one or two persons. When we get the request and the deadline that they give, when we get it sometimes we do not have any money to go to the training. So I try my best to source training so that the providers could come to Tobago so that the majority of the staff would be able to be trained.

Madam Chairman: Can I ask, when last training was done of the audit staff?

Ms. Hackett: The last training we would have had was in 2013, when we did the certificate in internal audit with the University of the West Indies. That was a year programme.

Madam Chairman: Member Cuffie.

Mr. Cuffie: Actually, Madam Chair, I was going to ask the very same question. So if you have 10 people did the course in 2013, and no one has done it since, are the other members of staff, has anyone—are the 10 people still there working in the accounts department, in the audit department?

Ms. Hackett: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Cuffie: Right. So you have identified a need for training, and you have more people need to do the certificate, what has prevented you all from 2013, now is 2017, why have not more people embarked on the training?

Ms. Hackett: In order for us to get the training in Tobago we had to get the numbers or UWI would not have bought in to Tobago, so we got the numbers. The other two officers who are there presently that did not do the training were doing their BS in Management, so that is why only 10 of us did the training. There are two officers, because of illness that they could not complete their last subject to get the certificate. We have been trying with UWI for the longest while for them to get to do that one subject to get the certificate, and to no avail. So sometimes there are problems. In order to do the training, we have to get the numbers in order for the school to come to Tobago to do the training, because it would be very expensive for us to come to Trinidad.

Mr. Cuffie: Given the constraints you have in terms of trained staff, how well would you say the department, the internal audit function is working?

Ms. Hackett: Excellent. Based on the numbers that we have we have been working tirelessly, because of the fact that right now we are understaffed because we are short of seven officers. We have 12 auditors working at present and we try our best to, because not only do we have to do pay sheets, audit of vouchers, we have to do pension and leave to send to the Comptroller of Accounts, all record of service, and then do all the systems audit in the 10 divisions of the THA.

Mr. Cuffie: Okay, you have given me your interpretation of your performance. How does the Auditor General think that audit is going in Tobago?

Ms. Hackett: Well, based on the submission of the Auditor General they would have stated that they think the audit is not doing enough, but I have records to show that the audit department, by reports that we submitted to the Chief Administrator and what we kept as records to show that we have been doing audits. Also, in the administrative reports submitted to Parliament we would show that we would do audit, but not—we would do audits, but because of the limited amount of staff we might be able to do an audit once a year. We might not be able to do it twice because of the fact that we have 10 divisions. If we have to do a bank reconciliation, we have to do 10 divisions which would have three banking accounts, so that is 30 bank reconciliation. Then we would do other audits to supplement, as well as do checking of the vouchers, doing record of service, and pension and leave audit.

Mr. Sandy: And, Madam Chair, can I also add here that very often they are taken off course, in the sense that any incidents of alleged fraudulent activity I call on them to go in and do an audit immediately, and they have spent some time doing that kind of audit also. I must say, I mean, I will say publicly here that the audit department, notwithstanding the limited staff, I think that they are doing a very good job for the Tobago House of Assembly.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, and, therefore, might I invite Member Baksh.

Miss Baksh: In the absence of a separate body for the internal audit unit, how does the department determine if an investigation conducted by the internal audit unit is free from bias?

Mr. Sandy: Can I get that question again, I am not too sure I understand it.

Miss Baksh: Okay. In the absence of a separate body, your submission indicated that, in the absence of a separate body for internal audit, if an investigation is conducted how do we know that the unit is free from bias?

Mr. Sandy: It is a difficult one to answer, but I would basically say that I trust the auditors to be unbiased, and I have had no evidence so far to suggest otherwise. I have had auditors who have audited their own relatives and have come up with recommendations that you would not normally find. So I have trusted the auditors, and I rely on them heavily for information in that regard.

Miss Baksh: Okay. How does the accounting officer deal with the issue of differences in opinion on what constitutes the legal authority in the case of decisions of the Executive Council and those of some of the arms of the central government? And what has been done to rectify this situation?

Mr. Sandy: That is a very interesting question. Sometimes we have an in-house legal team, headed by a Senior State Counsel, and we rely on that unit for legal advice. Sometimes, if the issue is one of greater national importance sometimes we go out for Senior Counsel advice. We have sought the advice of the Solicitor General in some matters, and we have received advice from the Solicitor General, let me put it that way. So we depend on various sources for legal advice depending on the complexity of the situation, and so on.

Miss Baksh: My other question deals with staffing issues. Have any attempts been made to contact the service commissions?

Mr. Sandy: Let me answer you by way of an example, a rationalization exercise was done of the Tobago House of Assembly in 2007, based on that rationalization exercise Cabinet approved a number of positions for the Tobago House of Assembly. We are now in 2017, 10 years later, and a number of those positions are before the Chief Personnel Officer for a reclassification, and a number of them are before the service commissions for appointment of officers to those positions, 10 years later. Does that answer your question?

Miss Baksh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member Mahabir.

Mr. Mahabir: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Question to Ms. Hackett on internal auditing. In your submission you indicated that the recommendations of the internal auditors are normally implemented. Could you provide actual examples where, out of the work of the internal auditors, there were recommendations which were subsequently implemented by the various arms of the THA?—actual concrete examples.

Ms. Hackett: For example, like if we are doing like bank reconciliation, examination of bank reconciliation, then we would identify that—they would do it wrong. They do follow the instructions and do it the way that we ask them to do it, because when we go back to do other audits we see it, as well as, when we are doing like Vote Book examinations, and we would make recommendations that, you know. You are not supposed to—like there might be instances they would pass a voucher under a particular Head that they are not supposed to, they would accede to it. In cases where we do audits, if we find something at the particular time, we would identify the mistakes and they would, in fact, do the changes immediately for us.

Madam Chairman: Member Dookie.

Mr. Dookie: Thank you, Madam Chair, again. Back to the issue of training, but not training directly, how do you know that your training interventions are working? In other words, how do you measure the impact it is having on job performance in terms of the audit function?

Ms. Hackett: Generally, I would assess it by the way the reports that are submitted to me. In the internal audit we have persons who, most of the officers meet the general requirements of the public service, which is you come into the public service with either, the audit department, with five O levels, accounting, or auditing. There is only one person who is a qualified accountant, which is myself, so based on my qualifications, and based on the type of reports, based on the audits that they do and the reports that I receive, I will be able to measure that from the reports submitted before whether or not they have grasped what was taught, or what they would have learnt when I send them out on training.

Madam Chairman: Member Bodoe.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. Chief Administrator, I just want to take you back again to the Auditor General's Report for 2015, in a follow-up to a question by a previous member, where the Auditor General identified that vouchers to support two transfers totalling close to $400,000, just short of $400,000, and schedules of accounts recording another two transfers totalling just over $100,000 to the Tobago House of Assembly were not produced for audit scrutiny? Could you, Chief Administrator, perhaps through Ms. Hackett, indicate what would have been the reasons for the failure to produce these documents?

Ms. Hackett: Can you repeat the question, Sir?

Dr. Bodoe: Sure. It refers to the Auditor General's report in 2015, where it states that there were two transfers, vouchers to support two transfers, which would have totalled close to $396,000, $900,677, to be exact, and, furthermore, schedules of accounts recording another two transfers, which would have totalled just over $100,000 to the THA, were not produced for audit scrutiny. This is the Auditor General saying this, can you perhaps shed some light on that?

Mr. Sandy: Yeah. I am a little taken aback by the Auditor General's comments, if what you are saying is coming from the Auditor General for 2015. In fact, after this meeting today, we are scheduled to meet with the Auditor General to discuss the management letter for the year 2015. And the preliminary letter that we got from the Auditor General, those two findings are not included there at all, so I am a little surprised because 2015 is now being audited. When I say now being audited, just being completed, and we are meeting with the Auditor General this afternoon, after this meeting, myself and the Director of Finance, to treat with the management letter from the Auditor General.

Dr. Bodoe: Well, Chief Administrator, I am very happy to hear that, so perhaps you could undertake, in light of this, to maybe clarify that.

Mr. Sandy: Certainly.

Madam Chairman: Member Cuffie.

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you, Madam Chair. Chief Administrator, I just wanted to check whether you have established the small internal audit division units in each division, because in your submission it said by March 2017, you would be establishing small units in the divisions.

Mr. Sandy: No, they have not yet been established. The positions have been identified, the persons have been shortlisted, and my HR Unit is treating with that as we speak. I must admit that at the time when that report was submitted I thought they would have been in place by now, but they have not been in place as yet.

Mr. Cuffie: But given the pool that you are working with, the Auditor II said she is the only trained accountant, you only had 10 persons doing the certificate course in 2013, where are you going to get people to fill these small units in the various divisions?

Mr. Sandy: Member, it is really an entry-level position, and the requirement is really five O levels, perhaps with maths and accounting. And, as I said earlier, I have received applications from persons with MBAs and first degrees in accounts, and so on, for those positions, those entry-level positions, and we are treating with that now. Because of the realignment of the portfolios in the THA, that is one of the reasons, it kind of derailed us a little bit in the sense that we are treating with that rather than the filling of those vacant positions, but I can assure you that we are going to put it on the front burner and get those persons in as soon as possible.

Madam Chairman: Member Dookie.

Mr. Dookie: Thank you, Madam Chair. Reference has been made to certain lack of expertise in the audit function that would have prevented certain examinations from being done, what type of expertise you refer to?

Ms. Hackett: As it relates to the lack of expertise, because of the fact that we do not have much trained accountants in audit, to do financial statements in a division you must have the knowledge of accounting, because in a financial statement, because of the fact that there are international standards that you have to follow, you have to be able to identify what is an asset, whether or not the assets are being classified properly, whether or not they are treated properly in the financial statements, and because of the fact that I am the only qualified accountant there might be persons who are doing ACCA and CIMA, but they are low-level staff, most of the time, because of the fact that I have to do administrative work I do not have the support to be able to do those audits because I also help in doing other audits that is required.

Mr. Dookie: And in situations like that how is that addressed?—it is just left undone, how is it addressed?

Ms. Hackett: Well, we have never, as the submission would have stated, we have never, since I have assumed duty we have never audited the financial statements, before it is submitted to the Auditor General's Department.

Madam Chairman: Member Mahabir.

Dr. Mahabir: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, again to Mr. Sandy, I need clarification, Sir, with respect to your earlier statement you indicated that the Auditor General is going to have a discussion with respect to management letter for 2015, but the transfers to which my colleague, MP Bodoe, referred to were mentioned in the Auditor General's Department website, Auditor General's Report, 2015, which were issued, so I suspect they referred to 2014, because it is the Auditor General's Report for 2015. But according to the information we have from the Auditor General's Department website, it said that there were really two vouchers totalling $396,000 and then $101,000. This came from the Auditor General's Report from the website downloaded and forwarded to us, so I would really like to get your views on it on whether in fact there is an error in the information we have, or whether the Auditor General's Report, 2015, was really referring to what happened in 2014.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Sandy: I know it could not be 2014, because the Auditor General did not audit 2014. They audit 2009 and then they jumped to 2015. Are you sure it is the Tobago House of Assembly or Central Administrative Services?

Dr. Mahabir: It is Tobago House of Assembly.

Mr. Sandy: Well, you certainly have information that—

Dr. Mahabir: There is a question mark. I would ask if your auditors can in fact reconcile the figures in writing, whether there was an error or not.

Mr. Sandy: Yes, we will submit a response in writing, Sir.

Madam Chairman: Might I ask then, Mr.Sandy, in the submission we were told that the charter of the internal work plan for fiscal 2017 was not prepared; however, there was a work plan for November2016 to March2017 that was prepared and approved by you. Might I ask if to date an internal work plan for fiscal 2017 has been done?

Mr. Sandy: The practice since I am in office is for the head auditor here to submit quarterly work plans for my approval.

Madam Chairman: Quarterly?

Mr. Sandy: Work plans for my approval. I think that has been the practice.

Madam Chairman: Quarter March2017 has been completed, what is the position going forward?

Mr. Sandy: A work plan for April to September has been submitted and has been approved.

Madam Chairman: So you really do it biannually?

Mr. Sandy: In this case a six-month programme came and I approved it, yes.

Madam Chairman: All right. I also found it very interesting in terms of audits being done of what are considered high risk. Under "Efficiency of the internal audit checks on specific areas"—what we were told is that internal audit ascertains what they deem to be high-risk areas and they formulate work plans to perform audits in those high-risk areas. What factors are used to determine high-risk areas?

Ms. Hackett: The factors that are used to determine the high risk is relative to whether or not if a division does not complete a particular project, how it would affect the objectives of the division in my view, as well as the amount of moneys that are spent on a particular project. Also we looked at areas where moneys can easily be removed as in the sense of like dealing with cashing transactions as well. So based on those kinds of objectives, I would determine what audit should be done.

Madam Chairman: Therefore, it is basically a subjective process used by you?

Ms. Hackett: Yes, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: The routine checks of activities that are undertaken, are these just of the high-risk areas or these are the other areas that are not considered high risk?

Ms. Hackett: The routine check is both. We would do high-risk as well as we would try to do normal examinations in between.

Madam Chairman: In the submission we were told that routine checks are done at least three times a year. That relates to what?

Ms. Hackett: We would try to do cash surveys at least three times per year. We would try to do like stores, but in the cases like doing audits as it relates to certain divisions that have projects and stuff, we might be able to do it at least once. Bank reconciliation we would try to do it once. In the case, like now and then, we would try to do the examination of the income and expenditure. We did it last year. In 2015 we would have done the Jazz audit. Because of the fact that so much money would have been spent, we would have tried to do an audit as it relates to that—because of the amount of moneys that were spent.

Madam Chairman: Maybe you can give us in writing a schedule of the audits you have done, say, in the last fiscal year and this fiscal year, and the number of times according to the high risk areas and the other areas.

Ms. Hackett: Okay.

Madam Chairman: But I understand your difficulties, your challenges, having regard to the limited staff and the wide span of the THA, because of your 10 divisions and so. Might I be correct in saying that a lot of the audit function is really concentrated on verifying things like pension, pension and leave records, records of service, arrears of salaries, wages, and on contract gratuity.

Ms. Hackett: Yes, Ma'am. Most of the audit is concentrated on that. I try my best, because of the limited amount of staff. I would at least try within every quarter, at least six members of staff which include me to do systems audit and the other remaining staff would do the checking of the vouchers and the pension and leave and record of service. But when coming to the end of the financial year, which is September, we do not do any systems audit. All the staff is concentrated on doing the vouchers because of the fact it is coming to the end of the financial year.

Madam Chairman: Can I ask whether you all have a fraud policy in the THA? It comes directly from Mr. Sandy saying that the internal audit sometimes is taken off their regular schedule to have to look at issues that appear to be fraud. So that is why I want to ask if you have a fraud policy.

Mr. Sandy: I do not know if we have a fraud policy. My policy with respect to fraud is wherever I hear of any kind of fraudulent activity I want to find out about it and root it out and treat with the issue. So I will ask internal audit to go in and do an audit and really determine whether or not any kind of fraudulent activity is perhaps taking place, and then take it from there. If I have to inform the police or whatever it is from there.

Madam Chairman: The identification of what might appear to be fraud usually originates with you and not with the internal audit?

Mr. Sandy: Sometimes from internal audit, yes, because Ms. Hackett here would bring—Ms. Hackett reports directly to me, and she would bring to my attention certain information, and based on that we will take a certain kind of action.

Madam Chairman: So can I ask, when last was there any issue where something that appeared to be fraud occurred?

Mr. Sandy: Without going into too much specifics, because it is a matter before the court.

Madam Chairman: I do not want the specifics. I just asked when.

Mr. Sandy: As late as last July.

Madam Chairman: Therefore, internal audit would have investigated that?

Mr. Sandy: Yes they would have.

Madam Chairman: Would there have been any valuable suggestions coming—and I do not want to know what the issue was—from internal audit to you as the Chief Administrator based on their investigation, and if there were, what then sort of steps would have been taken by you as the Chief Administrator to ensure that there would not be a recurrence?

Mr. Sandy: In every instance of any type of fraudulent activity, or even if it is not fraudulent, any deviation from what it is supposed to be, Ms. Hackett here would write to me indicating what the recommended solutions are, and I would then write to the administrator of that division insisting that the recommendations are implemented, and there is some follow-up after by the auditors to ensure that those recommendations are implemented. In 90 per cent of the cases they are implemented. In some cases they are not for varying reasons, but we try our best to put things in place to prevent fraudulent or irregular activity.

Madam Chairman: But I got a general answer. My question was really specific to the last incident which you identified in July last year, I believe.

Mr. Sandy: Yes I have had some recommendations, and yes we have implemented them.

Mr. Cuffie: Chief Administrator, I want to ask some questions on your monitoring and evaluation framework. I notice here that you say that projects are constantly examined to determine progress. I wanted to get an idea of a project that you have stopped because it was not going well, because it says here that you do continuous study to determine whether they are viable.

Mr. Sandy: We do continuous monitoring through the Planning Department. Unlike the Ministries in Trinidad that have Monitoring and Evaluation Units set up for that particular purpose, the only division in the THA that I know that had a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit—well, two divisions actually—I think Community Development had one and the Division of Infrastructure and Quarries, they had a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.

Outside of that, the Planning Department monitors these projects to ensure that they are going at the pace and that the moneys spent on them are in accordance with what the project plans were. I could ask Mr. Andrews to speak to that in terms of—any further disbursements are only made on the recommendation of the Planning Department, saying, well, we have examined this project and therefore we can disburse additional funds to them. I cannot recall any particular project—maybe Mr. Andrews might be able to assist me here—that we would have stopped because it was not proceeding in accordance with plans.

Mr. Andrews: That is also correct. We would not have stopped any project, but in discussion with the various project officers who are responsible for developing these projects and in discussion therefore around budget times, we usually have a general discussion with the Chief Administrator with respect to which projects, based on perhaps any perceived overlap with other projects, either within that division or with respect to a project that might have a similar set of objectives in another division, that we discuss with those divisions, well, okay, we do not put any funds in the next fiscal year for those, given those constraints in terms of time.

It has worked in some cases where the divisions do comply with that, because of the fairly large size of the portfolio, and that is another thing we try to do in terms of keeping things down so that we could get it more streamlined.

Mr. Cuffie: When you do surveys—because the report mentioned that you do surveys and you use empirical data—I know from my experience sometimes you have a good project in mind, but the execution does not turn out to what you had in your mind. How often do you do these surveys, and if you find that something just is not working, what is the process of streamlining it or getting it corrected?

Mr. Andrews: We would do the monthly status reports and of course we would have had quarterly reports, but the divisions are required to also submit their quarterly projections as well. What we do we combine the monthly status reports with what are the projections, and what I would do is a utilization report. We combine all three and we look at the projections. Like for instance at this point in time we would do a projection for September, and we would get a sense as to where things are going, and within there we can make decisions or we make recommendations as to, okay, if we intervene now this is where we could have potential excess and the extent to which moneys could be diverted to projects that perhaps may have a greater need for funds based on the performance of the others.

Madam Chairman: Just to take up on the questioning, Mr. Andrews. I get the impression, I might be wrong, that the monitoring—first, let me ask, there is no Monitoring and Evaluation Unit within the divisions, except for two divisions. Yes?

Mr. Sandy: Yes, Madam Chair. There are only two that have specific units for monitoring and evaluation.

Madam Chairman: If I understand what Mr.Andrews has described, it would appear to me that the monitoring that is going on is really just of a fiscal nature. You see, because you are talking about quarterly reports, you are talking about projections. So it seems to me this is the monitoring of the project implementation.

Mr. Andrews: Yes, it is the monitoring of the project implementation.

Madam Chairman: I think this might have been where member Cuffie was coming from. In your submission, we were told that the divisions also rely on empirical data collected through surveys and questionnaires, as well as feedback from communities to determine the impact of the programmes. So we are not here now really talking about implementation, but I would get the impression from this, that what you are really talking about you want to see if the project has the reach that you intended, if it is serving the community, if it is fit for the purpose—for want of a better description. Therefore, if you are doing surveys, one, do you do surveys and questionnaires for that?

Mr. Andrews: The Planning Department would not do that, but there is one unit called the Community Liaison Unit which would have community liaison officers, and they go out to communities and discuss with the communities. They try to find out what are the issues facing communities, and they report directly to the Office of the Chief Secretary based on the issues that are raised by communities. Those issues are then sent to the respective divisions where the actual jurisdiction and responsibility would lie. So even if it is a project, for instance, where maybe we have a problem with roads or with community centres being not on the list, the Community Liaison Unit would actually have officers in the field going out and talking with the community, and they bring reports back to the Office of the Chief Secretary and then that report is assessed and sent to the respective divisions for them to address.

Madam Chairman: So if I understand well, Mr.Andrews, would this be done before a project is started, during the execution of a project or after the project is completed?

Mr. Andrews: It is done ongoing and it is not specific to any one project. My understanding of how the Community Liaison Unit functions is that they have community liaison officers in the communities who liaise with the residents and so on, to ask about what are the felt needs, and they do their own observation with the unfelt needs and they produce a report for the Office of the Chief Secretary.

Madam Chairman: So if I understand that, well this is an unfilled need, so these are like wants, your wish list?

Mr. Andrews: Not really. Sometimes communities may not necessarily know. Because they may not have had certain services for a long time, they would not necessarily know, if you ask them; let me give you an example. If for instance you seem to have a problem with garbage collection, and you go to a community and the community talks about roads, they might talk about employment, but if you ask them, well, they accustomed seeing the garbage. So being immersed in a situation is really an unfelt need. So the Community Liaison Unit would not just look at what is discussed, but they also make recommendations after they sort of flag certain issues, and then take those back to the Office of the Chief Secretary, and then that is directed to the respective division to address.

Madam Chairman: So the monitoring and the evaluation is not really so much a sort of feedback from the community, but it also comes from the actual observations of your community liaison officers?

Mr. Andrews: Correct.

Madam Chairman: Can I ask, what is the spread of your community liaison officers, vis-a-vis your districts, or your villages or your communities?

Mr. Sandy: There are community liaison officers throughout the island. Each of them have their own area of jurisdiction, so the entire island is covered as far as having a community liaison officer. Back to your original question, Madam Chair, I would want to submit that the two divisions with Monitoring and Evaluation Units, if you would permit me to send a written response to your question in terms of the monitoring and evaluation, their output, because that part of the answer actually came from those divisions that have monitoring and evaluation units. My understanding—and I hope that I am right—is that they go out and monitor those projects and determine whether or not the projects are in keeping with what the projects are supposed to be, and if not, why not, and if it is necessary to terminate and so on, they can recommend that kind of action. That is how I understand it. So I can submit a written response to that for you in terms of those divisions with monitoring and evaluation units, what their functions are and how they operate.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Sandy, I would welcome that. I am just interested—as we are taken down the road with the community liaison officers—you said the island is completely serviced by how many community liaison officers, and do they work on some universal work programme? So that you know in the Assembly that they would visit their communities according to a particular schedule, that their reports would come in accordance with a certain schedule, or is it up to the community liaison officers to determine when they go the communities? Further, having done that, what sort of response there is to their recommendations?

Mr. Sandy: The community liaison officers all report to a coordinator who coordinates the activity of all the community liaison officers. That coordinator liaises with them on a weekly basis and determine their work programme for the next week and so on, and reports are produced as to what they are engaged in. Their primary role is to go out to the communities and identify those little irritants that might slip by the various official divisions. So they report on areas where road works are needed, for example, or where you have a water problem, or where you might have an electricity problem and so on. So they identify those little areas within the community where some relief can be brought. That is brought to the attention of the coordinator, who then submits a report and then that report is farmed out to the various divisions with responsibility for those areas.

Madam Chairman: What role does the Chief Administrator have in that?

Mr. Sandy: Not much of a role. The coordinator of the liaison units usually takes responsibility for that.

Madam Chairman: Are any reports done to you at all, annually or otherwise?

Mr. Sandy: Yes, monthly reports are done.

Dr. Bodoe: Chief Administrator, if I may direct your attention to goods and services, and in particular the Office of the Chief Secretary, if we look at your submission on pages 14 to 16 with regard to the hosting of conferences, seminars and other functions. There are several items listed there. There are three that I would want to just highlight. One would be the Chief Secretary's awards, THA awards, an allocation of $320,000. The senior citizens Christmas luncheon, $240,000. Of course, quite laudable events, but the question I have would be, in view of the current economic situation, whether any consideration has been given to perhaps adjusting or reducing the cost of these seminars and conferences for fiscal 2017.

The second question would be, I have noted that in your submission the statement that there no formal assessments are conducted on conferences and seminars and so on, if that is correct. If that is the case, how do you process the information from these events, going forward?

Mr. Sandy: To your first question, member, yes we are taking into consideration the financial situation in the country now and the resources that are not available to us anymore. Certainly those two functions, the Chief Secretary's award function and the senior citizens Christmas luncheon will be tailored to meet the new realities of the Tobago House of Assembly.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you for that response, Chief Administrator. I also note the Shaw Park Complex, and the item here speaks to the hosting of a forum with promoters, and the sum of $800,000 is allocated. The objective is to encourage use of the facility through marketing efforts. Can you indicate whether that sum is still being utilized and how do you go about hosting this forum?

Mr. Sandy: Can I promise to give you a report on that? I am not au courant with all the facts on that.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: I wanted, Chief Administrator, to just get some further clarification on a statement you had made earlier with respect to the students that you intend to hire in August, to assist with improvements in your deficiencies in inventory control. If I recall, in your submission your allocations for Short-Term Employment has decreased by 62 per cent in fiscal year 2017. Yes?

Mr. Sandy: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: My understanding is also that this vote, this allocation, is generally used for the hiring of people on short-term contract, usually this student programme during the August vacation?

Mr. Sandy: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Historically, a lot of that is used for students to bring up-to-date your pension and leave records and so on. With a decreased allocation, how are you going to meet both the needs of what historically you would use the students for, pension and leave and I think engineering was another area that you highlighted, with also the need, as you have identified, for improving your deficiencies in inventory control?

Mr. Sandy: Yes, Ma'am. The students that we take on—and it is not in August, we take on university students for three months, June, July and August.

Madam Chairman: If you will forgive me. I always say August meaning August holidays, in contrast to those who say "summer holidays".

Mr. Sandy: Number one, this year we will take on far fewer students than we did last year and the year before, so we are starting off on that with less students. So this year the concentration is going to be on assisting us with getting the inventories up-to-date. We have used some of the students in the past for this same purpose. I remember about five or six years ago, I used the entire complement at what was then the Division of Infrastructure and Public Utilities, to bring our records up-to-date in terms of the records that the Auditor General keeps complaining about, we could not produce certain documents and so on. I had them go through all the documents, basically put them in packages and so on and so on. So we are going to use the students again this year to assist with that particular purpose in terms of getting equipment, not just tagged, but identify serial numbers and so on and place them on that inventory listing or that record.

The students that normally assist us with the pension and leave during this holiday, they might be much less than we did in the past. We would have to do a judicial balance of the needs of the Assembly, the amount of funds that we have to spend, the reduced amount of funds that we have to spend. I think last year, if I remember well, we would have engaged maybe about 150 such students. This year the numbers are going to be much less.

Madam Chairman: In terms of the rate of pay that you give to the students, would that also change, having regard to the fact of your reduced allocation, or is that fixed and used every year?

Mr. Sandy: It is fixed based on a decision coming out of Central Government, where all the students are paid at the same rate.

4.30 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Chief Ad, how are the students selected for this programme?

Mr. Sandy: We have an advertisement on the website right now. I think the deadline for application was last—might have been yesterday, I think. So, we then determine how many persons applied and we do, more or less, a random selection of those persons. I mean, last year basically we did "eeny, meeny, miny, moe". [*Laughter*] I am serious. All the students who applied, we determined their need, and the ones who were needy students who far exceeded the number of students that we wanted to take on and we basically did a random selection.

Madam Chairman: So this is needs based or expertise based?

Mr. Sandy: No. It is not expertise based, it is needs based.

Madam Chairman: But your submission spoke—

Mr. Sandy: They do rudimentary kind of work. It is not anything specific to their studies and so on.

Madam Chairman: Because your submission almost gave that impression, in that you said that the accounting officer ensures that the individual employed has the required skill set to meet the demands identified for the job, and when you are talking about sub-item, "provide expertise in specific areas where the skill or expertise is not readily available among the current staff, example, civil engineering, communication", it did not give the impression that these were low level.

Mr. Sandy: Madam, are you sure that we are talking about the university students there?

Madam Chairman: Well, we are talking about Sub-Item 22, Short-Term Employment.

Mr. Sandy: That is different, Ma'am. Short-Term Employment is different from the university students.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So that, then we might have it wrong under this vote.

Mr. Sandy: It might be paid under the same vote.

Madam Chairman: So the vote is used to employ—

Mr. Sandy: To engage short-term.

Madam Chairman: Short-term?

Mr. Sandy: Yeah. Short-term.

Madam Chairman: And also people under the university programme?

Mr. Sandy: Yes. Yes.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: So, Chief Ad, Mr. Sandy, I still want to go back to the fairness of the process. It cannot be "eeny, meeny, miny, moe" if you are not picking based on the needs of the department or the area of expertise for the students. So if I applied first and take, for example, community development, enterprise development and labour may need somebody and you go "eeny, meeny, miny, moe", I applied first and so how would you deicide me over member Cuffie or anybody else? The reason I am asking is—

Mr. Sandy: It is not a first come, we do not use a first come, first served basis. We basically lump all the applicants together. If the deadline was yesterday, by tomorrow somebody would be tallying all those persons who would have applied to ensure that, one, that they are eligible because we only take students who are actually in university, not those are completing university now.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay.

Mr. Sandy: And the A level students must be in Lower 6 going to Upper 6, not the ones who are in Upper 6 and leaving school now. So once you meet those basic criteria, we basically lump your names together and if we deicide that we want 15 university students and we have 250, we basically say, take every sixth student, because it is as rudimentary as that.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member Bodoe.

Mr. Sandy: Random selection.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. Chief Administrator, just to follow up on member Webster-Roy's question and to get an idea on the numbers that are involved, could you tell us how many applicants you normally get and how many you are able to facilitate? And the ones who are not facilitated, whether there are other opportunities available, perhaps in the private sector in Tobago, where these students might be accommodated.

Mr. Sandy: I do not want to hazard a guess here, so I will give you the specific figures for like the last two or three years; I will give you a report on that, the specific figures of how many persons applied and how many were actually engaged. And as far as the engagement in the private sector, I do not have the information on that, but I do know that some of the private sector firms in Tobago do employ some of the university students during the "August holidays".

Dr. Bodoe: Does the THA actively formally facilitate that process or encourage it or has a mechanism in place to allow that, or is it just that they apply on their own?

Mr. Sandy: They apply on their own.

Dr. Mahabir: Are they paid minimum wages, these students?

Mr. Sandy: I think it is about—I cannot recall the figures, but it is somewhere around $5,000 a month or $4,500, somewhere around there. I can give you the specific figures, but I do not have it at hand with me now.

Madam Chairman: Member Cuffie.

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I move on to Goods and Services or have we not reached there as yet? Okay. I wanted to ask about 96 vacancies in the office of the Chief Secretary. Now, given it is a small department, it seems like a high number. Now, I know sometimes a vacancy does not mean that you are lacking staff; it could be the positions are no longer relevant or you are not trying to fill them. Could you tell me some more information about those vacancies, whether it is really 96 vacancies that you have in terms of these establishments?

Mr. Sandy: It had to be 96 vacancies and as you said, sometimes the vacancies are on paper, so to speak, and not necessarily vacancies that we regard to fill at this time. For example, we would have gone—we decided to establish a particular unit and the approval was for 40 employees, and at this stage we only require 12, so we only have 12, so it will appear as though there are 28 vacant positions there. But a number of the vacancies—I cannot say exactly how many—a number of the vacancies here would have been in the TEMA emergency management area where a number of the trained CERT technicians would have left for greener pastures and so on, so we have a number of vacancies there.

And we are in the process of retraining a number of officers for that unit. I know we had some vacancies in the OSH department, also at the time when OSH was under the Office of the Chief Secretary, so there are a number of vacancies in the various units. But I suspect the majority of these would have been vacant positions that we are not intent on filling right now.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Mr. Sandy, I have also observed that you had indicated in the submission that under Short-Term Employment there were, I think, two persons who have been reengaged, at least, three times because their expertise was required to assist with the compilation of pension and leave records. I want to know if, as we speak, those two persons are still employed under Short-Term Employment.

Mr. Sandy: These two persons were retired public officers who had the expertise in pension and leave and we took then on, on short term, because we wanted to treat with the backlog of pension and leave, and they would have completed more than six months and then we took them on for another six months and so on. At least, one of them is still working with us on a short-term basis.

Madam Chairman: So only one remains. Has there been any training by them of current staff to ensure that there is some sort of improvement in the capacity?

Mr. Sandy: One of them was specifically taken on to train junior officers, but we have the problem in the public service where officers move around so often and that is part of the problem in the general public service with pension and leave officers. Until it is made a specific stream in the public service, you would continue to have persons moving from there into HR, into other areas after the training and we will continue to have a deficit of pension and leave professionals in the public service, and it is really affecting us in Tobago.

Madam Chairman: One more question under this Short-Term Contract, short-term employment. A response that I found really interesting and I just wanted to engage you on it, this is—you had stated that:

The accounting officer ensures that the individual employed has the required skill set to meet the demands identified for the job to be done, and the periodic review confirms or indicates otherwise that the individual provides value for money expended on their employ.

How does one assess that the individual employed provides value for the money expended in their employment?

Mr. Sandy: By doing the quarterly performance appraisals. Once you are employed, your supervisor is supposed to do an appraisal of you on a quarterly basis and determine whether or not you are fulfilling the objectives of the position in which you are employed.

Madam Chairman: So when people are employed on the short-term employment contracts, they are given targets per quarter? How—I am really trying to find out what is this assessment based on?

Mr. Sandy: Not necessarily on targets per quarter, but you are employed to—you are assessed in terms of how you are performing the job you are employed to perform. The job might not be target based, it might not be how many persons you serve or anything like that, it might be your contribution to the larger effort of the unit.

Madam Chairman: And how is that assessed? And I am just trying to get an idea of how is assessment done? I guess from your answer you are saying it is more qualitative and quantitative.

Mr. Sandy: It is more a subjective-type assessment.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Sandy: Where your supervisor would say, okay, this person has worked well; they are willing; they complete the task given to them in a timely manner; those kinds of things depending on the level.

Madam Chairman: And is this assessment discussed with the employee?

Mr. Sandy: Well certainly it is; at least, that is the official way of getting it done.

Madam Chairman: Yeah. But I am more interested in if it is, in fact, done and not the official, theoretical way?

Mr. Sandy: Not in all cases, because I have had complaints from officers who have complained to me that their appraisal was done and they were not consulted and they did not even know that the appraisal was being done.

Madam Chairman: All right.

Mr. Sandy: So, I must admit that.

Madam Chairman: And would that therefore not prejudice or affect an employee's assessment—your judgment of whether they provided value for money—their availability to be reconsidered for another contract?

Mr. Sandy: Certainly. In fact, the procedure in place is that the employee must sign off on the assessment, saying I have read this and it is a fair assessment of my conduct here. Some employees have said, I have read this and I do not agree with the assessment of my supervisor and sometimes you have that kind of challenge.

Madam Chairman: Yeah. But that will ensure that it is fair.

Mr. Sandy: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: You are saying that there are instances that it has not occurred. And in instances where it has not occurred, of course, it should affect the fairness of the process.

Mr. Sandy: Certainly. Certainly.

Madam Chairman: Therefore, how is that treated with by you? Because, of course, if it is not a fair process, it means that the subjectivity could have other implications. How is that addressed?

Mr. Sandy: Okay. I would normally call in the supervisor, the person who conducted the assessment to find out what method did they use to assess the person without the person knowing that they were being assessed and ask them to reconsider the assessment, or I will ask a third party, somebody who worked closely with the person to also give another assessment of the person, and I would treat it in that kind of light.

Madam Chairman: How recently has that occurred?

Mr. Sandy: The last one I had to deal with would have been sometime maybe around August/September last year.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Sandy: But it is not very frequently that it happens.

Madam Chairman: All right. Okay. Member Cuffie.

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you, Madam Chair. Chief Administrator, I am interested by the short-term and the vacation employment, given the fact that certainly in Trinidad there has been a significant reduction in both—the ability to hire short-term and vacation employment. Going forward, for example, for 2017, do you see yourself being able to engage in both programmes? And how has the financial situation affected your availability to engage in short-term and vacation employment?

Mr. Sandy: Well, it has certainly affected us in a negative kind of sense. Just like nationally we do not have the resources that we used to have, so we would have to reconsider whether or not we can even afford to employ persons on short-term, even persons who are currently on contracts, there are no guarantees anymore that your contract would be—you would be offered another contract. We have to take everything into consideration even though the stated policy of the Tobago House of Assembly is to try to keep the employment levels as stable as possible, but that of course, that comes at a cost and we will have to consider that in terms of the resources available to us.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And Chief Administrator, just to go back a bit. Under Contract Employment, we have seen that your allocation has increased by 35 per cent, and what we were told is as a direct result of increases of employment and also for payment of contract gratuity and arrears of contract gratuity. As far as the arrears of contract gratuity, what period is that?

Mr. Sandy: It varies, Madam Chairman. We have persons who have not received contract gratuity for a contract that would have completed eight years ago, six years ago; it varies. So we are now trying to tidy up that whole arrangement that all persons should receive their contract gratuities on a timely basis.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And from the allocation this year, how much of that sum is going to contract gratuity arrears?—one. And secondly, would it totally wipe out the arrears?

Mr. Sandy: I will have to submit that in writing, Madam. I have to get the figures for you on that.

Madam Chairman: All right. Thank you very much. Member Dookie? Member Webster-Roy? Okay. So, maybe then we can go on to Minor Equipment. Are there any questions that members would like to pose under Minor Equipment? Member Baksh.

Miss Baksh: In your submission you indicated that the division anticipates the following changes which the first one is, the expansion of several schools which would require additional furniture and furnishings. And the second one being, the upgrade and/or replacement of non-functional furniture and furnishings. My question to you is: Which schools are the recipients for additional furniture and furnishings for fiscal year 2017? This is under Minor Equipment Purchases for the divisions of education, sports and youth affairs.

Madam Chairman: This should be under Chief Administrator Sub-Head 03, Division 06/002, Primary, Secondary, and Vocational Schools, Sub-Head 03.

Mr. Sandy: Can I get the question again, please?

Miss Baksh: The question is—you have indicated in your submission that the division anticipates the following changes for fiscal year, the first one being the expansion of several schools which would present the need for additional furniture and furnishings, and the second one being the upgrade and replacement of any non-functional furniture and furnishings. My question to you is: Which schools are the recipients for additional furniture and furnishings for fiscal year 2017?

Mr. Sandy: I will have to provide that in writing. Offhand, I know for example that they are expanding in the Anglican school and—[*Inaudible*]

Miss Baksh: Okay.

Mr. Sandy: So, I will submit that you in writing.

Miss Baksh: My second question to you really deals with: What are the mechanisms in place to oversee the disposal of non-functional furniture and furnishings?

Mr. Sandy: Can I ask my colleague here to answer that question?

Mr. Taylor: Could you please repeat the question?

Miss Baksh: What mechanisms do you have in place to oversee the disposal of non-functional furniture and furnishings?

Mr. Taylor: Okay. Thanks. The system that is in place for unserviceable items, there is a committee under the finance and economic division. This committee consists of an auditor and a public service member along with the chairman which is myself. Divisions submit applications for non-serviceable articles for viewing. Members of the board of survey then go out and view these items. If they are damaged, unusable, if they could be used, if they could be sold, if they could be donated and so on. So, we make recommendations leaving the decision, the final decision for the administrator to decide or approve. So there is a board of surveys committee to look at these items which you speak about.

Miss Baksh: Thank you. You have also indicated that there are no internal audit reports produced to ensure that there is evidence of transparency and accountability. Can you explain the reasons for the reports not being completed?

Mr. Sandy: Can you go over that again, please? I am not too sure I understand.

Miss Baksh: Okay. In your submission you indicated that there are no reports, internal audit reports produced to ensure there is evidence of accountability and transparency? All right. That is under the same Sub-Head 3, Minor Equipment Purchases.

Mr. Sandy: Okay. On that particular.

Miss Baksh: On that particular. Right? So, I am asking to explain the reasons for the reports not being completed, and how would the division then determine transparency and accountability?

Mr. Sandy: The question was whether or not we have internal audit reports produced? And we are saying that no internal audit reports are produced, as the member of staff indicated. An auditor is on the board of survey committee that looks at these, so in that context the auditor is there in his or her capacity to ensure that the rules are followed and so on. And what that committee does is basically look at the item; determine whether or not it can be used; whether it has gone past its useful life and what can be done; whether it should be dumped; whether it should be auctioned; whether it can be donated and so on; and that recommendation goes to the administrator who decides on the future of that particular piece of equipment or item. So the auditor is there in his or her capacity to ensure that the rules are followed and to ensure that there is transparency and so on in the whole process.

Miss Baksh: Okay. I just have one more question under that Sub-Head. How does the division ensure selection of suppliers is free from bias?

Mr. Sandy: As we said earlier, usually there is at the beginning of the financial year you get a list, you advertise and get a list of potential suppliers. So you have an approved listing. The procurement units that are in place now, even though they might not be called procurement units, they usually go out and establish the bona fide of these business interests.

In fact, I remember when I used to be an administrator at Works and Infrastructure and Public Utilities, I would have sent my accountant and administrative officer to Trinidad to verify the bona fide of some business interests who wanted to supply us with some equipment and so on, only to find out they were literally—the address we got was an empty lot here or a playground here and so on. So, we go out there and we establish the bona fide.

And then once we are on the list and we require those, that particular good or service, then we would go down the list and select those for sending the request for bids, so in that way we kind of ensure that we are dealing with bona fide businesses and that the process is fair in the sense that each entity is given the same information; they are given a date in which to submit it; the envelopes are opened at the same time with witnesses and so on so that we ensure that nobody gets any advance information and all of that. There is a process in place for it.

Miss Baksh: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Sandy, I just wanted to follow up on a question that member Baksh had asked in terms of the division determining transparency and accountability with respect to the disposal. And you said, there is an auditor on the board of survey that would ensure the rules. In the submission there was reference to reliance on a robust accounting system in place where there is a separation of duties from the procurement stage right through to the payment stage. And I really would like to get some understanding on what this robust accounting system is, and how that impacts on the transparency and accountability of the division?

Mr. Sandy: Well, this is not related to the disposal.

Madam Chairman: This is related to the fact that there are no internal audit reports. And when you were asked the question about there being no internal audit reports, what you indicated that the auditor sits on the board of surveys and therefore ensures that the rules are followed, so that is just one aspect it. But the initial issue was with respect to there being no internal audit reports produced to ensure evidence of transparency and accountability in the supply of furniture and furnishings, the upgrade and/or replace of any non-functional furniture and furnishings.

So my question is, yes, as far as disposal what you are saying, "doh" mind we "doh" have audit reports, internal audit reports, an auditor is there. I am saying on the other side, with respect to your answer, you are saying, "look we doh have internal audit reports, but we have a robust accounting system". And I am trying to find out what that is. That is under the Item with primary schools, secondary and vocational, Sub-Item 03, Furniture and Furnishings.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Madam Chair, if I could attempt to provide some clarity. More or less, we are speaking to the standard Financial Regulations. There is a separation between the duties of those at the accounting units and those that do the procurement as we are now, and from the unit that creates the committee that treats with the disposal. So there is clear separation between the function of acquiring payment and disposal. So when we talk about that robust system, more or less, we try to follow that accounting procedure.

However, I must also add that the board of survey committee, there is a standard form in the public service that is used to report on the findings of the committee, and that is what is submitted to the administrator for consideration.

Madam Chairman: But, is it really not the internal audit function and reports that would really satisfy you of the fact that there is compliance, that there is transparency, that there is accountability? Because virtually you are saying, because you have this robust accounting system and because you comply with it, yes, you have passed, but is it not the function of internal audit to really ensure that there is compliance with whatever the Financial Regulations to point out where there is not?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Certainly, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: From time to time as the auditor would have indicated, depending on the area of audits they are doing, if that is one of the areas that they are looking at, any particular in terms of the assets and there is any variation, then certainly the auditor will present a report to the Chief Administrator which would be identified to administrators accordingly for correction.

Madam Chairman: Right. So as far as this particular—because you are talking about a specific area, eh, which is Sub-Head 03/06/002 Sub-Item 03. Okay? So that really, there is not any internal audit report at all on this, and you just rely on the fact that, "Look, we say we following standard Financial Regulations".

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: No, I think when we said no internal report, it is not totally that these particular areas are not reported on. In terms of the context that we saw here we looked at the disposal area where you were talking about. The auditors will not audit the committee per se; as we said, there is an audit committee. However, in looking at our furniture and furnishings, if the auditor is in a particular division and is looking at items that are stored and items that are registered with a particular division, if there are any irregularities, the internal auditor will certainly submit a report on the particular area of deficiency. Did that answer your question?

Madam Chairman: It is a general answer and, therefore, what I would like is that if maybe we can get in writing a specific response as relates to this particular Sub-Head and when last any internal audit report was done.

5.00 p.m.

Mr. Sandy: Madam Chair, can I just, I think the way the question was asked, I think we are interpreting it in the wrong way or differently on how you are interpreting it. The question was, are internal audit reports produced? And we said, no internal reports are produced. It does not mean that internal audit does not do a check, because you asked if they were produced and we said, no, because if we had said, yes, we could not produce one here. So it is in that context.

Madam Chairman: Okay, I am sorry and therefore in the context of, if there are internal audits and when last, okay, even in the absence of the report. Okay? And therefore, if there are internal audits and no report, then what is the benefit of the internal audit? Okay? Member Cuffie.

Mr. Cuffie: Madam Chair, I wanted to go to page 22, the hosting of the forum for the Shaw Park Complex. Could I get an idea of what is envisaged for that?

Mr. Sandy: Is that the same item I promised to do a report on, Madam Chair?

Madam Chairman: I think so. I think that was asked by Dr. Bodoe.

Mr. Sandy: I can still answer the question though. Basically, Shaw Park Complex is a new entity on the market. We are selling it as a premiere concert facility in the Southern Caribbean. In fact, only three weeks or a month ago we had the very first, literally sell-out concert at Shaw Park. That is the Sinach Gospel Concert, "In His Presence VII". We are selling it as that. So this line item was about marketing Shaw Park to bring more concerts and that kind of thing to Tobago, because, of course, you would appreciate that when a concert of that nature comes to Tobago, the hoteliers benefit, literally the whole economy of Tobago and Trinidad and Tobago benefits.

Mr. Cuffie: What I was trying to get was whether there was a planned event or is it just a ballpark figure?

Mr. Sandy: I think it was a ballpark figure. We would, for example, have sent the coordinator of Shaw Park—I know he visited Las Vegas sometime earlier this year in a convention dealing with concerts and so on, to try to sell Shaw Park. So that is one activity I knew that took place.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I would really like us to go on to Current Transfers and Subsidies. Members of the Committee, I think we have to be mindful that the Tobago House of Assembly has to return this evening and they leave on the 6.30 p.m. sailing. So we want to be sensitive—[*Crosstalk*] It is what? The 6.30 p.m. flight. Well, I am just hoping things will get better. So it is the airport you have to go to? I guess it is because I was so enjoying your company I thought it had to be a sailing. [*Laughter*] And therefore, we have to be sensitive to that and to the traffic. I will therefore just maybe allow two more questions and regrettably let us try to bring this to an end at 5.15 p.m.

What I would like to say to Mr. Sandy, we would follow-up our other questions in writing. The Secretariat will do that and give you a time by which to respond for the conversation to continue. So I wanted to ask member, Dr. Mahabir, if he would ask some questions and we will end with member Webster-Roy.

Dr. Mahabir: Thank you very much. There are really two questions, but I am permitted one. And the question I want to pose is in relation to your rolling three-year tourism plan and the subventions which are given to the airlines to assist in the marketing of Tobago. Could you give some additional information as to the airlines by name which received this type of subvention and what is the amount of funds, the sum of money we are talking about?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Member, could we provide that in writing, please. That response, we would have to seek the Administrator for Tourism, Culture and Transportation and certainly they would be able to give us the specifics.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am moving over to Consolidated Fund. Under Sub-Head 09, other Economic Services there is a variance of $4.1 million, where the 2017 estimate moved from $900,000 to $5 million. In your submission you noted that the increase in allocation will treat with expansion of the business incubator programme, infrastructural works at the micro enterprise centres and a plan to establish and launch the programme at the Cove Eco-Industrial and Business Park.

My first question is, how will the business incubator programme be expanded? Question two, how many businesses benefited from the programme for the fiscal period to date and I have another question I will ask you after you answer me the first two.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Okay. I would read the research information that was provided for us. The micro enterprise centres were in themselves to serve as a type of business incubator for the small entrepreneurs. It was envisaged that they would successfully migrate from small-scale operations to large level of operations, since it is anticipated that they would be engaged in some level of capacity building. With the downturn of the economy, however, their progress has been somewhat stymied. Update on the centres—you had asked about Signal Hill? Could you repeat the other part of the question?

Mrs. Webster-Roy: I asked, how many businesses benefited for the fiscal period to date from the programme?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: From the programme? Those activities would have been curtailed due to the funding situation. But certainly for specific information I would provide it in writing.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay. My other question. Thanks. You noted that there are going to be some infrastructural works at the centres. I wanted to know if the works commenced.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: At the micro centres?

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Yes.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Yes, yes, they have.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: They have commenced?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: They have commenced.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: And what percentage of work completed and the cost?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: The cost I would not be able to provide—

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Could you give it in writing?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: But they are about 90 per cent completed.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Would you be able to give the cost in writing?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: I would be able to do that, certainly.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay. One more question and then I will wrap up.

Madam Chairman: We have time.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: We have time? Okay, thanks. How do you identify locations for centres? What is the process to decide which community will get a micro—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: The micro centres?

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Yeah.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: There may have been a process for that decision. I came into the Division of Finance and the Economy in 2015 and they were already well in progress. So in terms of the background information, that may be on file in terms of how they would have decided on that, but certainly we have set up those micro centres at Signal Hill, Plymouth, Argyle and Calder Hall.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay, so Madam Administrator, you have now put yourself in a spot. So you have noted Argyle, and I am from Roxborough bordering Argyle.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Yes.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Argyle is not operating. What is the plan to have Argyle up and running? What is the plan to ensure that all the micro centres are fully utilized and businesses are attracted to these facilities?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: With regard to Argyle, there were some funding issues that would have slowed the process of that project, but I am sure in passing you would have recognized that a lot of work would have been done and maybe that would have been opened a few weeks ago or maybe soon, because those centres have now been reassigned to the Division of Community Development, Enterprise Development and Labour. So they are no longer under the Division of Finance and the Economy. And this is why within this last quarter all the works have been transferred there and therefore the particular secretary and division will certainly have those up and running.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: So I am going to take it as an assurance that all the micro centres are up and running—

Mr. Sandy: No.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Not all.

Mr. Sandy: The one in Plymouth is still being completed as we speak. I know the one in Signal Hill, Calder Hall completed and up and running. And I think the one at Argyle, either was opened last week or will be opened soon. But the one at Plymouth, they still have some minor works to be done there.

Madam Chairman: And therefore, Mr. Chief Administrative, could you just in writing confirm to us—

Mr. Sandy: Yes.

Madam Chairman: With respect to Argyle. Member, Dr. Bodoe.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. Chief Administrator, I have two questions with regard to the Development Programme. One with regard to the agricultural access roads and the other with regard to the Enterprise Assistance Grant Programme. And I ask you this because, of course, those are the areas of diversification that we are looking at. The first question is, in view of the $25 million allocation for agricultural access roads and I know that this has been decreased from $47 million, can you indicate how many agricultural access roads have been built so far?

Mr. Andrew: Our status report shows that they would have done 25—there was work done to upgrade 25 agricultural access roads throughout various parts of the island.

Dr. Bodoe: In terms of the—

Mr. Andrew: And a report could be provided with the listing of those roads.

Dr. Bodoe: And that would be much appreciated. But in terms of your target for the financial year, that number would represent what percentage?

Mr. Andrew: I would also provide that information. I do not have the information at hand.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you. The second question pertains to the Enterprise Assistance Grant Programme. And the question would be, how many persons were given grants under this programme? And how much has been dispersed from the allocation so far?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: In terms of total grant, you have $821,232.63.

Dr. Bodoe: Can you say how many—

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: For fiscal 2016.

Dr. Bodoe: And can you say how many persons or enterprises, organizations would have benefited from this expenditure?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: If you hold for a few seconds we will count. Approximately 48.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you.

Dr. Mahabir: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for permitting me a second question and this again is in the area of Transfers and Subsidies. In your submission you indicated that there is a Fish Processing Company of Tobago proposed, FIPCOT, has been mandated by the Executive Council to establish a modern fish processing plant. It did not say to establish a profitable fish processing plant, it says a modern plant.

I really need further particulars with respect to, is this going to have private sector participation, given the history we have had in Trinidad with a similar plant? Is it that you have had a feasibility study? Have you had any kind of expression of interest from foreign partners, further details on this project? What is the estimated cost and what is perhaps the annual profit realized that you expect over the next—the life of the project?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Member, the questions are quite detailed and we will certainly take the precise question and provide the answer in writing. I know the Division of Finance and the Economy, we have a unit looking at the public/private partnership initiative and certainly areas that can benefit from this process would be considered by the Secretary.

Dr. Mahabir: Could you advise the Committee whether there was a feasibility study done, a cost benefit analysis done so that we could project the profitability of this enterprise.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: I cannot give you that information offhand, Sir.

Mr. Dookie: Thank you again, Madam Chair. In dealing with the three-year rolling plan for tourism. How do you measure the impact it transfers to airlines, or having on visitor arrival? How do you measure that relationship, bearing in mind that there are other independent variables that will impact visitor arrival. How do you know that the transfer to the airline actually, positively impacting visitor arrival?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Again, the Administrator for Tourism, Culture and Transportation may be able to give specifics. But I know there is a research unit based at that division who conducts surveys on occasions, on arrival of the flights, have discussions with the property owners, with taxi operators and various tour operators to determine the impact of these airlines. And I am sure they would have detail on that.

Mr. Dookie: So surveys are done, you get the information from surveys?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Yes, from the surveys.

Mr. Dookie: I just want to know again in the same vein, how do you measure visitor spend?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: There is also that exit survey done by the researchers at the division who will determine and most of it is done by the survey questionnaires, either on arrival or to determine the funding or determine how much spent on their departure or have discussions with some of the business operators.

Dr. Mahabir: A follow-up to the question again on the subventions given to the airlines. Can any member advise the Committee whether any other Caribbean country, CARICOM country, provide a similar type of subvention so that their own tourism product may be enhanced?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: I could say, St. Lucia, Barbados, and also Antigua. I know that in my tenure at that division there would have even been discussions with these islands to partner with them so that you have the drops taking place along the way so that it reduce the impact of the cost on Tobago.

Dr. Mahabir: And could you advise, because that is very, very interesting. What is the status of those discussions with respect to the partnership to minimize the cost and maybe minimize the budgetary impact on the THA of this expense?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: I think some have not gone to the full extent. I think there was one arrangement that even created some challenges for us in terms of the island's commitment, but I do not have the specifics on that.

Madam Chairman: Just in that light, can I ask, specifically which international airlines receive funding under this Sub-Item?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Of my previous knowledge I know British Airways, but certainly we would provide that in writing if you want specific information.

Madam Chairman: And in the submission we were told that the Internal Audit conducts audit on the books of the division and will give recommendations on ways to improve performance as the need arises. Is this considered a risk—I think it is a risk, is the terminology you had used? A high-risk division.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Could you ask the question again, please, Ma'am?

Madam Chairman: In your submission you said Internal Audit conducts audit on the books of the division and would give recommendations on ways to improve performance as the need arises. Earlier, Internal Audit had told us about determining high-risk areas. I want to know if this is considered a high-risk area.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: I think it would and I am talking here for the Auditor. Again, I am only talking to you, Madam Chair, from my previous experience at the Division of Tourism and Transportation, we would have had audits conducted and recommendations made for some of the improvements that we should do.

Madam Chairman: So let me ask, when last an audit was conducted? What were the recommendations and steps which would have been taken pursuant to the recommendations?—and that I would take in writing.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: And you are talking specifically with regard to the airline?

Madam Chairman: The airline. And therefore the Internal Auditor is here, so I think she is in best place to say to the Committee whether something like this is considered high-risk.

Ms. Hackett: With regard to the year rolling plan—three-year rolling plan, I cannot recall doing a specific audit with regard to the airline. When we were doing the Jazz audit in 2014, they would have done some marketing under this Sub-Item and then we would have gathered the data, the moneys that were spent.

I can also recall when doing the Jazz audit in speaking to some of the workers at the division as it relates to some of the airline, I think there is an airline with Brazil and some coordination that they have—I would have also stated to them they were receiving reports from these airlines and I would have told them that we need to get them in our language so as to ascertain whether or not they would have complied to what we would have paid for. Because the language they would have submitted, in their language, and then I would have asked the questions if they know for a fact that these persons would have provided the services that they would have paid for and they would have complied and ask them to submit their reports in our language.

Madam Chairman: You are saying that the reports they would have submitted was in Portuguese.

Ms. Hackett: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and therefore—thank you very much. As regards to my original question, would you consider this a high-risk area based on the factors you used to determine what is high-risk.

Ms. Hackett: Yes, Ma'am, I would consider that because of the amount of moneys that are paid out to these airlines as well as the marketing so that we could get more people into Tobago.

Madam Chairman: And therefore, when last was an audit done?

Ms. Hackett: We have not done an audit recently.

Madam Chairman: Okay, thank you. One more question, I wanted to find out about that is, what is the timeline or are payments made to the international airline by specific dates? Are they made periodically or is there one lump sum payment?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Madam Chair, it is paid in tranches.

Madam Chairman: And those tranches are time specific, like for instance, let us say in the fiscal year there are three tranches, are they payable by a specific date?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: I think that is still the case, yes.

Madam Chairman: The last thing is, who monitors the contracts with the Assembly and the airlines to ensure that the airlines are doing their part, fulfilling their part of the bargain?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Madam Chair, I think the Director for Tourism at one point in time and you have marketing officers who perform those tasks.

Madam Chairman: So the marketing officers monitor the contracts? Let me ask then, what tasks do the marketing officers perform?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Let me say that I am not certain in terms of that monitoring part of the contract, but in terms of ensuring that what is required is delivered, I think there is some relation between the marketing director and there is a transportation coordinator assigned to that division who would treat with things of that nature.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so could we get some clarification in writing?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Certainly.

Madam Chairman: To me what was said there, looking to see what is done is done, is really monitoring the contract. But maybe as we say, maybe we should get some further definite responses from the divisional head of this.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: We will provide that in writing.

Madam Chairman: Okay, thank you. I just could not help but ask about the processing company of fish in Tobago which really seems to be a very laudable initiative. I had observed in your submission, in terms of developing the capacity of the Maritime Sector you all had spoken about training and certification of vessel captains and vessel engineers. Could I ask how far that process has reached?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Madam Chair, I will provide that in writing.

Madam Chairman: And we were also told that in terms of the other aspect of this company which is to develop the deep-sea fishing industry and that capability that the company intended to acquire two vessels. Can I ask how soon are those vessels intended to be acquired and what is the process for identification and acquisition?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Madam Chair, given the change in the economic climate I need to go back to the division to get that information in writing. I am not sure how far or what would be done with regard to that.

Madam Chairman: All right, but let me ask something. This determination was done in fiscal 2017 or prior to fiscal 2017? The determination to acquire.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Madam Chairman, this would have been a proposal that, given that this document was done in January, it would have been a proposal coming forward for this fiscal. And I know in terms of funding— [*Interruption*]

Madam Chairman: So the proposal would have been done in light of the tightened financial circumstances in any event?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: I am saying that coming from the end of the last fiscal, we would have received those projections from the company and it is for the division to assess, to determine whether these proposals can in fact be implemented.

Madam Chairman: I appreciate that and maybe, Mrs. Davidson-Williams, the difficulty may be as you say, you are not the divisional head, but certainly the budget would have been passed by the end of October and therefore I am sure the divisional heads would have had an opportunity to see what their allocation was and one would have expected, having regard to what was going on in the financial climate, certainly by January when your submissions came in that a reassessment or a re-evaluation of needs would have been done against wishes. So that, you know, to be telling us in January2017, when your submission was presented, something which was wished for before the budget, time having passed for five months and no reassessment of that need having been done, strikes me a bit strange, but we will await the answer. Member, Dr. Mahabir.

Dr. Mahabir: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, a follow-up question again on the fish company. A while back it was customary visiting Tobago to purchase processed flying fish in Tobago, processed in Tobago. But I see the focus here is deep sea tuna. You see, I am wondering whether, in fact, a feasibility study has in fact been done to determine the profitability of deep sea tuna processing as opposed to what was traditionally done in Tobago with respect to flying fish.

So maybe if a feasibility study has been done on this fishing company, FIPCOT, I certainly would like to take a look at it, if you can submit that, so that I would be satisfied that it is in fact the way to go. There is something in economics known as "comparative advantage", what you do well you tend to stay with, and processing flying fish is something that Tobago has always done really very, very, well. So I am wondering whether, in fact, there are good reasons for moving out of this and into deep sea tuna which, in fact, may or may not be profitable. But I would like to get the feasibility study if you have one.

5.30 p.m.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: I would certainly provide in writing, Sir.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And I just have one more question about this company. In the submissions we were told that requests for releases are submitted in accordance with strict guidelines which outlines expenditure, and I would like to find out, really, what are these strict guidelines or what is the authority for these strict guidelines that outlines the items of expenditure that are referred to in your submission?

Ms. Trim: As a company, these are picked up under the Current Transfers and Subsidies. So it is just a subvention that they would be applying for in accordance with the items of the classification of items of expenditure. It is just a subvention to the company that they apply for and the funding is released.

Madam Chairman: So again I ask, so what are the strict guidelines that outlines? What are those?

Ms. Trim: We would look at whether it is within the allocation, and that is the Audit and Exchequer Act and the financial rules and regulations.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So could I get some elucidation of this in writing, please? Because it seems to suggest something else. And the last question I have on this is that we were told that the Chairman is required to submit audited reports, and I do not know if this is one of the guidelines that Ms.Trim is referring to. So that the Chairman is required to submit audited reports. Can I ask what is the deadline for these audited reports, and when last were the audited reports submitted?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: The last audited report was 2015. FIPCOT's last—the fishing company?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: Their last audited report was 2015.

Madam Chairman: And when was 2016 due, or is due?

Mrs. Davidson-Williams: The end of the fiscal.

Ms. Roberts: They are working on it right now.

Madam Chairman: They are working on it right now.

Ms. Roberts: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So it would have been for 2015/2016 fiscal.

Ms. Roberts: That they are working on right now, yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Ms. Roberts: Audited reports have been submitted for 2014/2015 and they are working on 2015/2016 at present.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. And have there been any findings of the 2014/2015 audited reports?

Ms. Roberts: When I saw the audited reports— No, there were no major issues in the audited report. No.

Madam Chairman: Okay. But there were issues?

Ms. Roberts: Yes.

Madam Chairman: And could you therefore share those with us?

Ms. Roberts: Yes, in writing.

Madam Chairman: All right. Are there any other questions that the—all right. So I really would like to thank the Tobago House of Assembly. Before we wrap up, I just want to—Mr. Sandy, I cannot avoid asking this, certainly just for the members of the public who are listening, to hear. You had said that you had brought this contingent in the hope that they could answer as many of the questions, and having regard to what the remit of this inquiry was. Can I ask why you did not bring the divisional heads?

Mr. Sandy: That is a very good question, Madam Chairman. And honestly, just before you made that statement I was thinking that, perhaps, the best thing to do would have been to bring all the administrators here with me—all 10 of them. So certainly the next time around I will bring all administrators here who have direct and intimate knowledge of the operations of their own divisions so that you might have to permit us to bring a larger delegation the next time around.

Madam Chairman: Well, I am certainly assured, and you too, that we could accommodate them. So I take your answer to say that you accept responsibility for your choice?

Mr. Sandy: Yes, I do.

Madam Chairman: And certainly it was not a question of lack of finance.

Mr. Sandy: In that case, we could have ferried them down. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: I want to, at this stage, bring this public hearing to an end. I want to thank the members of the Tobago House of Assembly, Mr.Sandy and his team, for coming over and being so enlightening with respect to their operations. Mr. Sandy, I know that time might be against us but if it is one thing, if the Tobago House of Assembly cannot get on a flight to Tobago, "yuh saying something here that I doh think we want to say in public". And therefore, I want to just invite you to take a few minutes just to, maybe, tell the Committee in what ways you feel the Committee could assist you all through its recommendations.

Mr. Sandy: Well, first, let me thank the Committee for having us here, and just simply by the questions you would have asked, and some of the areas that we were unable to give you the information immediately, that signals to me that we have some work to do in certain areas of the operations of the Tobago House of Assembly, and I am certain that we will put our heads together—this team—and get those things straightened out.

The Committee certainly would want to make some recommendations and we are looking forward to those recommendation because those will also assist us in moving forward in the way we account for public funds and in the way we operate as a public entity in the space of Government in Trinidad and Tobago. So we would really appreciate to hear from the Committee, all the positives, negatives, whatever it takes, and we will certainly ensure that we take on board any recommendations that emanate from this august body and we will certainly ensure that whenever we appear before here again, we will bring a team that is more suited to answering your questions fully and a team that will certainly do justice to the process that you are engaged in here. We want to thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I thank you. I wish you all a safe journey home. I will hold you to that commitment. I want to thank the members of the public, the members of the media who stayed with us. I want to thank the members of the Committee. This meeting is now suspended.

5.37 p.m.: *Meeting suspended.*