

MINUTES OF THE ASCENSION ISLAND COUNCIL
FORMAL MEETING HELD IN THE COURT HOUSE
Thursday 8th November 2018 at 1630hrs

Present: Justine Allan, Administrator
By phone Lisa Honan, Governor
Catherine Leo, Acting Director of Resources
Councillor Terence Young
Councillor Nicky John
Councillor Alan Nicholls
Mark Neale, Crown Counsel
By phone Marcus Goode, FCO

In attendance: Jane Disley, Clerk of Council

Apologies: Councillor Keturah George [overseas]
Councillor Samantha Arms-Lawrence
Andrew Sigley, FCO
Charlie Henning, Asst Director of HR

1. Welcome

While waiting for the last Council member to arrive, The Administrator introduced Marcus Goode and asked him to briefly outline the purpose of his visit to Ascension. Once all were assembled, she welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Formal meeting – 4 Oct 2018: Cllr John had asked for his comments on the hospital to remain in the action points but also be added to the minutes under AOB. Cllr John also asked for the comment to be amended to show that he was disappointed that Council was not informed of CSSF-funded projects earlier.

Action: The Clerk would make the necessary amendment and circulate the amended minutes for approval.

b) Informal meeting – 1 Nov 2018: Various points were made about these minutes:

i. Closed session. There was discussion about the closed session. It was reiterated that – as per the actions in these minutes – Crown Counsel would produce a simple paper summarising the Council processes which should help incoming Council members in future. It would include mention of the closed session. The Governor advised that the Ordinance already included the full Council requirements so this should be the source for relevant points.

ii. Medical complaints. The Administrator explained that there were two aspects to this topic. Firstly, Asst Director of HR had asked St Helena for information about their updated process for dealing with medical complaints. Secondly, if people were not happy with how their complaint had been handled they could approach their Councillor to take it further. She suggested that the action points list could be amended to make this clear. The Governor said that sometimes people might want to approach their Councillor because they are wary of a negative impact if they complain

directly to the medical staff. She also advised that, as a result, the process would need to include a form for the complainant to sign which would allow access to their medical data by the Councillor.

Action: The Clerk would update the action points list to include the option for people to approach their Councillor.

- iii. Road Safety. Cllr George had expressed concern over use of the word “aggressive” in this point. The Administrator explained that it had been difficult to hear all voices during that part of the discussion and this word could be changed.

Action: The Clerk would amend the re-word that sentence.

- iv. Finance Committee. Cllr George had proposed Cllr John as a new member of the Finance Committee. All approved this proposal.

- v. Vulnerable Adults Committee. Cllr George had also proposed Cllr Nichols as a member of the Vulnerable Adults Committee. Cllr John said he believe members were appointed by The Governor. The Governor was happy that the Council propose a member and that The Administrator would appoint that person.

- vi. Acting Administrator. Cllr Nicholls asked that the wording be changed to show Cllr George as having raised the question about transfer of responsibilities to the Acting Administrator, rather than himself.

Action: The Clerk would amend the wording appropriately.

- vii. Taking of blood. Cllr Nicholls asked that the phase “on the scene” be removed because this was not accurate.

Action: The Clerk would amend the wording appropriately.

3. Ordinances

Crown Counsel summarised the ordinance review. He then explained that the existing Section 4 stated that the Governor must appoint a person to be Registrar of Marriages. The Amendment Ordinance would effectively repeal that Section 4 and substitute it with the provision that the Administration is (by definition) the Registrar of Marriages. The Validation Ordinance would provide that the person filling the Administrator position is deemed to have all the powers of The Administrator, and this would be retrospective. In other words, on appointment The Administrator would automatically become Registrar of Marriages and this would apply to all Administrators who have held that post since the Marriage Ordinance came into effect in 2016. Equally, it would apply to all Acting Administrators.

Cllr George had raised a question about a registrar appointed on St Helena that was not the regular Registrar of Marriages. She asked if it was possible on Ascension for someone else to be appointed. The Governor explained that this was specific to St Helena because they have a dedicated Registrar so this appointment was to cover the possibility of the registrar being off-island.

The Administrator proposed that a vote be taken on approving the proposed changes to the Marriage Ordinances. The Governor confirmed that there were sufficient numbers present at the meeting for a vote to be taken. All were in favour so the proposed changes were approved.

Action: Crown Counsel would now take the necessary steps and forward the draft ordinance to The Governor.

4. Any Other Business

- a) Finance nomination: This matter had been dealt with under item 2 above.

- b) Incinerator lighting: Cllr George passed on a query from a member of the public about the lighting at the incinerator. It was very bright well into the night so the question was raised as to whether or not this would continue indefinitely. The Administrator replied that there were contractors working into the night to get the facility running properly, and so there was no intention that the lights be on 24/7. Acting Dir of Resources said that the lights were solar so would go off at the end of the day. The Administrator offered to look into the matter.
Action: A follow up action would be assigned to Operations Directorate.
- c) Swimming pool: Cllr John asked for an update on the Georgetown swimming pool. Acting Dir of Resources explained that it had closed originally because the pump had failed and that this item was in the financial programme. However, it also needed refurbishment so the plan had been to do the work at the same time. She did not know the timescale for the work and so would find out and report back.
Action: Acting Dir of Resources would make enquiries about the timescale for the Georgetown pool refurbishment and report back to the Council.
- d) Animal health and welfare: Cllr Nichols raised the issue of animal welfare given that Caz Yon – who had for many years provided unofficial health and care services – was leaving the island for good. Crown Counsel advised that Ascension had a Cats and Dogs Ordinance, which was currently under review. This Ordinance did not cover animal welfare of domestic pets but this was being revised in the new draft. Ascension does not have a vet so options are limited. It was the intention of the Administrator to bring the veterinarian from St Helena once a year for vaccinations etc., but if people were bringing dogs or cats to Ascension, they do so at their own risk. Cllr John asked about who took responsibility for the feral animals e.g. the donkeys and sheep. Crown Counsel explained that it was impossible to legislate for them, although protected species were covered under different regulations. Cllrs reported concerns that had been expressed by the public about a donkey that appeared to be suffering. The Administrator explained that the island had two people who were firearms qualified and could shoot an animal in distress, but this was the only option. She suggested that Council might wish to discuss it at the next informal meeting and suggested the next informal on 22 November. This was agreed. Cllr John asked what the procedure was on St Helena. The Governor explained that there were very few feral animals but that they had a vet so it was not comparable.
Action: The Clerk would include this subject in the next informal agenda.
- e) Fencing in Two Boats Village: Cllr John asked for an update on the fencing materials. It had been agreed at the last meeting that Lee Smith would be asked to provide the Administrator with a list of materials required. This had not yet been done. Cllr John confirmed that he would act as liaison between Lee Smith and The Administrator.
- f) Kevin Hudson: Cllr John asked, on behalf of Kevin Hudson, if there could be a review of his tax level because it had proved difficult to manage costs in his Georgetown business. He stressed that he provided a service to the community. Acting Dir of Resources explained that his tax rate could not be changed because if AIG did that for him they would have to do it for everyone. The Administrator also explained that although she was keen to support local businesses, the continuance of Government services relied upon generating income, such as from businesses on the island.

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 1720hrs.

J Disley

Jane Disley

Clerk of Council