

Ascension Island Government
Clerk of Council's Office
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Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council
1630 on Thursday 7 Nov 2019 at the Court House
MEETING SUMMARY

Present: HE Dr Philip Rushbrook, Governor
HH Steven Chandler, Administrator
Gareth Morris, Director of Resources
Allen Cansick, Attorney General
Councillor Katharyn Chadwick
Councillor Andrew Ellick
Councillor Kitty George
Councillor Andrew Hobson
Councillor Alan Nicholls

In attendance: Linda Hardiman, Head of Administrator's Office
Rob Cheeseman, Crown Council
Alasdair, Bain, Policy & Projects Officer
Jane Disley, Clerk of Council
Apologies:

Following adoption of the minutes from the last formal meeting on 27 Sep, the matters arising covered the following: **Low voter turnout at election** (a discussion to be tabled at the next or subsequent informal meeting); **Council Committees** (concern was raised that there should not be an 'ExCo-type' arrangement as in St Helena; other councillors and the Administrator were clear this would not be the case); **Draft Council Protocols** (expected to be ready for the next informal meeting).

Crown Counsel provided an introduction to the main topic of the meeting: **employment legislation**. He explained the background, including work done previously, and he presented some options for consideration. These were for the purpose of breaking down a complex issue and thereby providing a workable platform for councillors' discussion. The primary consideration was to identify what the new legislation needed to achieve, eg what issues or problems needed to be resolved, and for the work required to be balanced against AIG's limited resources and other competing demands.

There was some discussion about the impact of the no right of abode policy and how this affected employment contracts. The Governor explained that the UK Govt had been clear on the no right of abode policy and recommended that the Council focus on aspects that would not come into conflict with it, eg maternity, unfair dismissal.

There was some discussion of unfair dismissal, including how it manifests and how it might affect some people; it was agreed that this was an important issue for review.

The remainder of the discussion surrounded how to approach the review, eg to work through the proposed options sequentially or in parallel. Each method had its merits and its drawbacks in terms of making meaningful progress and reporting this to the public. The question was raised as to whether or not it was possible to apply good employment practice from elsewhere. Crown Counsel explained that legislation from St Helena had been reviewed and could offer useful elements. However, he cautioned against a more wholesale adoption, explaining that to do so would create a risk of adopting legislation that is not necessarily suitable for Ascension. He explained that we ought first to assess what the issues are on Ascension, what we need to do about them, and the best way to go about that, before then adopting a solution (which may, but need not, include legislation).

The consensus was that it was important to work through all options thoroughly while also taking advantage of any 'quick wins', eg to align details within the legislation with current accepted practice. There was some discussion about the correct time for employer engagement. This would be carried out later in the process once councillors had had time to work through the issues and proposals. However, it would be important first to clarify current standard contractual terms for each employing organisation. Since this was a significant piece of work that could not be done in one session, it was agreed that the Council would break it down into 'away day' sessions at a time/day and duration appropriate to the particular matter under review.

The Council agreed to move the Ascension Day public holiday in 2020 from Thursday 21st to Friday 22nd May.

There were several items of other business: (i) owing to the UK general election, the November annual OTs/UK Joint Ministerial Council had been postponed, probably until March 2020; (ii) the draft Firearms Ordinance would be discussed at the next meeting since Inspector Kewley had been unable to suitably progress it to date due to illness; (iii) the Clerk to Council had now simplified the 'Actions/Progress' tracker which would be circulated with each meeting agenda in future; (iv) the Runway Rehabilitation Project Tender Board was due to meet this month and a contract award was still expected in December; (v) a request had been received for smaller tyres in between the larger ones at the pier steps to protect smaller boats and this would be explored; (vi) reports had been received of conger eels in the Turtle Ponds and options to prevent this would be explored; (vii) the opportunity for hydroponics training could be lost at the end of November so this would be urgently addressed; (viii) the new AIG website had gone live on 7 Nov and a public notice would be issued to that effect.

The meeting closed at 1800hrs.

J Disley

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Clerk of Council