

ASCENSION ISLAND GOVERNMENT

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Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council

1000 on Thursday 6 Feb 2020 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: Xander Halliwell, Head of Administrator's Office
Alasdair Bain, Policy Officer

Rob Cheeseman, Crown Council
Jane Disley, Clerk of Council

Following adoption of the minutes from the last formal meeting on 18 Dec 19, the matters arising were addressed via the actions tracker and current topics discussed were as follows: **Food security contingency plan** (work was underway on a plan which would be brought to Council in due course); **Fishing during ship to shore ops** (safe procedures had been agreed and these would be subject to a 3-month trial. Details would be shared with the public once a policy document had been produced); **Optician survey** (the survey had been distributed with a reply deadline of 29 Feb); **Residency of A-level students** (AIG would discuss changes in legislation that would be needed but other matters had taken precedence to date).

The Policy Officer provided a brief on the recent visit to AIG's **hydroponics facility** by a specialist agricultural colleague from St Helena Government's ANRD and introduced AIG's analysis report on the farm which had been circulated prior to the meeting. Each councillor gave their view on the cost versus benefit dilemma of AIG's continuing to operate the loss-making hydroponics farm. The consensus among councillors, with one expressing caution, was that although there was little prospect of the operation breaking even the benefits to health, morale and welfare justified the expense of underpinning food security and public access to fresh produce in this way and that the operation should be budgeted next financial year. In response, the Governor expressed his concern about AIG continuing to fund a loss-making enterprise.

Both the slightly amended **Firearms Ordinance** and the **Island Council (Procedure) Rules** were endorsed and proposed to the Governor who accepted them. It was noted that the **EU Withdrawal Agreement Ordinance** had been enacted in January.

The Administrator provided information about the **runway project**, in particular the successful contractor and the current proposed delivery timeline, including the arrival of personnel, plant and machinery. AIG was now party to regular meetings to monitor progress and potential impacts as contract delivery progressed. The USAF and RAF Commanders had agreed to brief the Council following the contractor's scoping visit to the island in the last two weeks of February.

There were several items of **other business**: (i) the Administrator provided an update on preparations for the OTs/UK Joint Ministerial Council in March; (ii) advice had been circulated via a public notice about the coronavirus; (iii) there was a discussion about emergency planning and resilience for Ascension in the event of a major incident; (iv) Cllr Chadwick provided a brief update from the Welfare Committee; (v) a concern was raised about a surgery being cancelled at the hospital recently; and (vi) dates for the next meeting of the Employment Reform Working Group were discussed.

The meeting closed at 1120.

J Disley

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Clerk of Council