



## Informal meeting of the Ascension Island Council

1630 on Thursday 16 April 2020 at the Court House

### MEETING SUMMARY

Present:	Sean Burns, Administrator Gareth Morris, Director of Resources Rob Cheeseman, Crown Counsel	Councillor Katharyn Chadwick Councillor Andrew Ellick Councillor Kitty George Councillor Andrew Hobson Councillor Alan Nicholls
In attendance:	Xander Halliwell, Head of Administrator's Office Dee Baum, Director of Conservation & Fisheries Jane Disley, Clerk of Council	Apologies:

The matters arising were addressed via the actions tracker and current topics discussed were as follows:

- **Waste collection trial** The Administrator would check progress on the report with the Policy Officer.
- **Fishing during ship to shore ops** Dir Res would liaise with Policy Officer and Ops Mgr to ensure a notice was prepared in time for the next ship to allow agreed arrangements to be trialled.
- **Optician survey** The results were being collated by the Hospital, but had been delayed owing to coronavirus work.
- **Residency of A-level students** The school had made progress with two UK-based colleges for distance learning courses and had opened discussions with pupils about their aspirations.
- **Emergency planning** The Administrator reported that the new command structure (Gold, Silver, Bronze) for emergency operations had been enacted. HoAO reported that disaster management planning work had been picked up recently and refocussed toward coronavirus response.
- **Solar light in TB playground** The suggestion had been passed to Ops but not acted upon. Questions were raised about the solar trial so the Administrator agreed to seek an update so far.

There was a comprehensive update from HoAO about **coronavirus** (COVID-19) on Ascension. This included information both about the new three-tier system and the table-top exercises to test it, and about the testing equipment that had been ordered. There was also some discussion about medevac obligations and arrangements, the impact of coronavirus restrictions on the runway reconstruction project and essential versus non-essential visitors.

The Director of Conservation & Fisheries provided some background information about the **Biosecurity Ordinance and policy** designed to prevent damage to public health, the economy and wildlife. Subject to some final, very minor amendments Council members were content that this could be presented at the next formal meeting.

Cllr Hobson presented a memorandum about the Public Works Committee draft **Terms of Reference** (TOR). Minor amendments were required to the TOR although they were approved in principle. Cllr Hobson also presented a memorandum about the Committee's monitoring **hydroponics and the solar street light project**, which also required minor amendment before it could be accepted.

Cllr Hobson presented a memorandum about **social care** and discussion followed about the requirement for and constituent parts of an effective social care system. As a result the memorandum would be amended slightly before being re-presented by the Welfare committee.

Cllr Hobson presented a memorandum about extending the stay on Ascension of **A level students** who turned 18 before completing their course. Work was ongoing to find a permanent solution but the memorandum sought to introduce a short term option for those students making key choices now. With a minor amendment to the memorandum's wording the Administrator was content to consider written applications on a case by case basis.

HoAO provided an **update on the runway project**. He confirmed that the contractor was still planning to send materials by ship which would be unloaded and stored by Wolf Creek but could not move personnel in the short term because of coronavirus restrictions. This would eat into the contract's planned time buffer, resulting in only a minimal delay, if any. Regular meetings were taking place with Fluor who had been very receptive to Ascension's requests for new protocols and amended arrangements.

There were two items of **other business**:

- (i) **Food management** Cllr George summarised a number of complaints about the Seafish Chandlery. These primarily covered food pricing, eg despite the recent tax holiday and waiver of ship to shore handling charges on foodstuffs prices had increased, and management of food supplies. This reignited concerns about future food security and a discussion followed about the issues and implications. The Administrator confirmed that he had had a meeting with the Chandlery Supervisor who had assured him they had food stocks to last 4-6 months. However, given that the Manager had not visited for some time, the Administrator agreed to seek a teleconference with him to explore some of the concerns, including management of the regular order from the AIG's hydroponics facility.
- (ii) **MV Helena schedule** Cllr Nicholls raised public concerns that the MV Helena would not call at Ascension in June and would therefore not visit until September. It was confirmed that traders had been asked for their anticipated requirements because the operator had indicated that if there was insufficient material for delivery it would bypass Ascension on this occasion. Responses had yet to be received and collated.

The meeting closed at 1845.

**J Disley**

J Disley

Clerk of Council