

ASCENSION ISLAND GOVERNMENT

Clerk of Council's Office
Ascension Island
South Atlantic Ocean
ASCN 1ZZ



pa.admin@ascension.gov.ac

+ (247) 67000 ext 100

www.ascension.gov.ac

Informal meeting of the Ascension Island Council

1700 on Thursday 01 July 2021 at the Courthouse

MEETING SUMMARY

Present: HH Xander Halliwell, Acting Administrator
Rob Cheeseman, Crown Counsel
Gareth Morris, Director of Resources

Councillor Andrew Ellick
Councillor Alan Nicholls
Councillor Douglas Miller
Councillor Nicholas John

In attendance: Caitlin Thomas, Clerk to Council

Apologies: Councillor Kitty George

The Acting Administrator welcomed all parties and thanked everyone for attending.

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

- **Animal Welfare [pets]:** It was confirmed that the vet is unavailable for the August flight; further options are being explored on the flight in September along with additional costs.
- **Single-use Plastics:** Progress has been postponed due to conflicting priorities; however, the policy officer will provide an update with a timeline ahead of the COP26 meeting.
- **Connection Issues with telecommunications in the Courthouse:** The cable is currently being unpacked from the June FIRS and will be installed in the near future.
- **Flight details over the festive period:** Tentative schedule of the flights have now been issued by St Helena Government (SHG) with a double shuttle in August and September now confirmed. Further updates to follow when available.
- **Councillors to nominate Councillor to JMC:** Cllr George had proposed by email that she and Councillor Nicholls could attend this year's JMC, there were no objections from fellow Councillors but a consensus would be reached outside of the Council meeting.
- **Explore the options/measures that may be enforced regarding the dumping of fish waste at the pier head:** This would remain on the tracker until the DoCF returns in August.
- **Sewage Treatment Plant:** Contracts have gone out to tender and technical details are being discussed from potential candidates. At Cllr Nicholls' request, the Acting Administrator advised he would send out a one page summary from the CSSF funded report.
- **New Location for Resource Library:** A request was made by the school to move the library elsewhere in order to establish a dedicated space for plus 16 students, providing the best possible environment to commence their online studies. A formal notice will be distributed in order to gauge the opinions of the public.

The Administrator provided an update on the **runway project**. He confirmed that things are progressing well, with 77 Construction beginning the crushing of aggregate. The USAF resupply liner, the MV Jacqueline C, is scheduled to arrive in Clarence Bay on Sunday 04 July 2021 for a period of approximately 10 days to offload additional equipment for the runway project. The subject was raised regarding the road leading down to the Pierhead. The Acting Administrator explained that works were completed at the junction and the bottom of the road, along with a surfacing treatment on the whole road to prevent it from degrading further. Cllr Ellick requested an update on whether the option had been considered to keep contractors on in order for any road maintenance to be completed in the future. The DoR expressed that this is being considered with 77 Construction in hopes that a proposal can be attained.

The Acting Administrator provided an update on the current **COVID-19** status of the island. He also advised the Council on upcoming changes to the quarantine policy which sees length of quarantine directed by group size and

vaccination status. Alongside this shift, a requirement for pre-arrival testing was being introduced and a revision to the response level protocol which adds an additional, fourth tier, for when a case is identified in isolation. Changes were being introduced under guidance from Public Health England (PHE) and due to the successful vaccination campaign that had taken place earlier this year.

Cllrs responded to the changes in a positive manner. Cllr Ellick voiced that he was glad to see the AIG was not moving the quarantine duration to as low as PHE advised, but had taken a conservative approach to ease in the changes. Cllr John raised questions on the drivers behind the shifts to which the Acting Administrator advised that this was a tolerable risk change due to the current vaccination levels of the island.

The Acting Administrator also advised that the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office had confirmed they would be sending more of the AstraZeneca vaccines to the island as early as 09 July, depending on logistics. This was well received by Cllrs.

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

- i. **Director of Operations Departure:** Charles Poole has resigned from his post as DoOF and will be departing via the next A400 on the 09 July 2021. In the interim the Director of Resources will be offering support along with Facilities Manager Christopher Hunter.
- ii. **CSSF Fund:** The financial status of the fund was discussed along with the recruitment of a new project manager following the departure of Graeme Knibbs. It was explained that the Waste Water Treatment Plant has been funded by the CSSF this year which was seen as a priority.
- iii. **Resurfacing of the School Playground:** A business case is being brought forward for which hopes to have more information at the end of the month. Cllr Ellick suggested that the idea of contractors should be considered for certain projects in order to attain certain expertise.
- iv. **Driving Licences:** Cllr John addressed the topic of the compatibility of licences between Ascension and St Helena. The Administrator suggested that this be discussed with the Police who could offer further information on the subject.
- v. **Surgeon on Island:** It was confirmed that Dr Shub will be here in the interim covering for Dr Bianca Vandenberg whilst she is away on leave. Dr Shub is due to arrive on 09 July.
- vi. **Queen's Platinum Jubilee:** A formal request has come through for the Queens Platinum Jubilee Beacon for next June. Cllrs confirmed they wish Ascension to take part.
- vii. **Visit of the Royal Navy ship HMS Protector:** It was announced that HMS Protector would be visit Ascension for a period of approximately 18 days in a couple of months' time carrying out hydrographic measurements, scanning of the waters and fishery patrols to ensure that there is no illegal fishing taking place. A request to come ashore to undertake a career visit to the school has also been made.
- viii. **Departure of Lt Col Brian Wernle:** The change of command takes place on Thursday 08 July, and will welcome Maj. Matthew Adams to the US Base. The Acting Administrator conveyed special thanks to Lt Col Wernle for his involvement and hard work enhancing UK / Ascension / US relations and in particular with the runway project during the past year.
- ix. **Inshore Fisheries Strategy:** The Administrator provided a brief update that the Inshore Fisheries Working Group (IFWG) has been formalised with the first meeting held on 15 June 2021.
- x. **Crown Counsel:** The Council and the Acting Administrator expressed great thanks to the outgoing Crown Counsel Rob Cheeseman, who attended his last Council meeting prior to his departure on 09 July 2021 and noting the large amount of work undertaken during his tenure such as reform of employment legislation and implementing covid regulations.

The meeting closed at 18:50

Caitlin Thomas
Clerk of Council