

ASCENSION ISLAND GOVERNMENT

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Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council

17:00 on Thursday 15 July 2021 at the Courthouse

MINUTES

Present:	HE Dr Philip Rushbrook, Governor HH Xander Halliwell, Administrator Aine Hurley, Acting Attorney General Gareth Morris, Director of Resources	[Remotely]	Councillor Alan Nicholls Councillor Kitty George Councillor Andrew Ellick Councillor Nicholas John Councillor Douglas Miller	[Remotely]
In attendance:	Luke Atkinson, FCDO Desk Officer	[Remotely]	Caitlin Thomas, Clerk of Council	
Apologies:	Robert Cheeseman, Crown Counsel			

1. Welcome

The Administrator welcomed all parties and explained who was present for those attending remotely.

2. Approval of Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Formal Council meeting held on 10 June 2021 were accepted with one feedback comment received. In accordance with the Council Rules these had already been agreed by Council members and published on 30 June 2021.

Decision: The summary of the Informal Council meeting held on 01 July 2021 was accepted, with one feedback comment received. In accordance with the Council Rules the summary had already been agreed by Council members and published on 07 July 2021.

3. Matters arising

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 would not be able to make the flight in August but did indicate that they would be available for the flight in September. The cost sharing mechanism will be discussed further in the meantime.
- **Single-use Plastics:** It was agreed that this would go up on the list of priorities and that the Policy Officer would send an email out to Councillors providing an update. Councillors noted this was particularly relevant due to COP26 in November.
- **Connection Issues with telecommunications in the Courthouse:** The cable has now arrived via the FIRS, however further peripheries are being sorted in order for the cable to be installed.
- **Explore the options/measure that may be enforced regarding the dumping of fish waste at the pier head:** Update provided to Council by email on 07 June 2021. This will remain on the tracker until the Director of Conservation and Fisheries returns in August 2021.
- **Councillors to nominate Councillor to attend JMC:** Councillors agreed that Councillor Nicholls attend this year's JMC. Cllr Nicholls expressed his thanks to all concerned.

- **New location for Resource Library -Tasty Tucker:** A formal notice was distributed on 12 July 2021 requesting comments from members of the public regarding the relocation of the resource library, all feedback comments should be submitted by Friday 23 July 2021.
- **Summary provided to Councillors regarding the CSSF fund** – The Administrator informed Council that an update will be provided to Councillors prior to the next meeting.
- **Road maintenance after the runway project is completed** – The Administrator will be writing to 77 Construction to confirm conversations taken place to discuss further costing processes.

4. Coronavirus update [standing item]

The Administrator provided an update about **coronavirus** (COVID-19). It was announced that a case was self-reported by an individual who arrived via the recent A400 flight. The individual informed the hospital that they were displaying mild symptoms of COVID-19. A positive test result revealed that the individual had a high viral count in their system resulting in the island escalating to level 2 ORANGE of the response protocol. The person had been bubbled with another individual since arrival. They have since been individually isolated and will continue to be monitored throughout their isolation periods. It was conveyed by the Administrator that the individual had previously been partially vaccinated with a non-Astra-Zeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

Another second batch of Oxford Astra-Zeneca vaccinations arrived on island via the recent A400 flight. These would be issued to new arrivals and those not yet fully vaccinated. Cllr Miller queried if there is now a possibility for the under 18s to be vaccinated, however, the Administrator expressed that it has not yet been approved by the UK Government.

5. Runway project update [standing item]

The Administrator provided an update on the runway project, citing a recent tour of the facilities having been undertaken with Councillors, who expressed their appreciation. The Administrator confirmed that the contractors were 69.5% through with the crushing of aggregate that arrived via the last ship. The excavation phase of the eastern half of the runway was now 100% complete, with on-going inspections being carried out to ensure there weren't any defects. Cllr Nicholls queried if the timeline to completion remained the same, the Administrator informed all that the proposed date looked to have shifted by a month, however, this will depend on the speed of the future aggregate offload.

The next aggregate ship is scheduled to arrive on Monday 19 July 2021 with offloading commencing shortly thereafter. The next shipment will enable the contractors to cover the subgrade layer of the runway.

The Administrator expressed that further road repairs would be carried out by 77 Construction along the main haul route and at the Saint's Club junction which had suffered a crack since its initial paving. Cllr Nicholls questioned if an explanation had been given as to why the road had suffered damage in such a short space of time; the Administrator explained that the top layer of the road had not received a coating treatment on first installation, however the contractors will endeavour to carry this out during the repair work to prevent early disintegration occurring again.

6. Any other business

- **Maintenance of Green Mountain infrastructure:** The topic of Garden Cottage was discussed by Cllr Nicholls with complaints being made from members of the public regarding the condition of the neglected outside lawn area. Concerns were also raised over the construction of the arch coming to a standstill as well as the Red Lion being neglected despite the considerable amount of money that had been invested in refurbishing the building. Cllr Nicholls also stated that the road leading up to the mountain along with the general infrastructure needed to be considered in order to ensure it is safe for public access. The Director of Resources confirmed that an extended business case was being put forward to ensure that maintenance is carried out on additional areas of the mountain as well as Garden Cottage.

- **Police personnel:** Cllr Ellick expressed concerns over the shortage of Police staff on the island. The Administrator informed Council that due to staffing processes, the current number of on-duty police constables had temporarily reduced; however, steps were being taken to mitigate this such as recruitment where necessary. In the interim, options were being explored to gauge the possibility of bolstering the on-island presence to ensure the Police detachment operates effectively.
- **Blue Marine Endowment Fund:** Cllr Ellick requested that an update be given on the fund; efforts will be made to provide an update by the next informal from the DoCF, however, she is currently on off-island leave. Cllr George informed Council that she had recently received an email regarding the £80,000 that was allocated at the end of March 2021 in which it was suggested that the funds be spent on the sports facilities on island. It was suggested that an article be published in The Islander newspaper to ask for views from the members of the public.
- **Protocol for flights on the A400:** Cllr Ellick queried the current procedure on which individuals are allowed to fly via the RAF A400 flight. It was explained by the Administrator that there is no guarantee of a seat on the flight as it was a military cargo asset and not a commercial service. All requests made must be approved by the FCDO and the MoD in the UK. Civilian access outside of a defence contract context would need to first come to the Administrator's Office. Any use of the flight is under a special Military Aid to Civilian Authority (MACA) process. The Administrator went on to say that the previous Ministerial agreement, which outlined five reasons for use of the flight, had been suspended over a year ago due to the COVID-19 situation. The Administrator confirmed that everyone should initially request for space on the Titan charter flights, however, requests are made to move appropriate individuals to the RAF A400 flight in order to accommodate excess passengers due to the reduced flight capacity of the runway. The Administrator offered to talk Cllr Ellick through the process separately.
- **Eating facilities at the Airhead terminal:** Cllr Miller explained that due to the early check in times and long waiting period for the Titan flight the NAAFI shop is not suitable enough to be able to accommodate hot food and drinks for passengers, it was agreed that further options will be explored with options ranging from asking the NAAFI wagon to visit or meals to be provided. The DoR added that any provided meals would need the costs recouped through the seat ticket costs.
- **Ferry Boat Service by Schuyler Line Navigation Company (SLNC).** Cllr John queried if this service was still being offered to members of the public. Cllr George explained that SLNC had requested the removal of the mooring span to which all small boats had previously been moored, prior to the erection of the jack-up barge. SLNC had agreed that following the removal of the span, they would provide a ferry service. A written agreement was in place to ensure this happened. Any complaints can be sent to the Administrator's Office in the first instance.

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 18:15

Caitlin Thomas
Clerk of Council

I certify that this is a true record of the meeting to which it relates.



Xander Halliwell
On behalf of HE the Governor, Dr Philip Rushbrook