

## ASCENSION ISLAND GOVERNMENT

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



[pa.admin@ascension.gov.ac](mailto:pa.admin@ascension.gov.ac)

+ (247) 67000 ext 100

[www.ascension.gov.ac](http://www.ascension.gov.ac)

## Informal meeting of the Ascension Island Council

17:00 on Wednesday 12 January 2022 at the Courthouse

### MEETING SUMMARY

Present: HE the Governor, Dr Philip Rushbrook  
HH Sean Burns, Administrator  
Gareth Morris, Director of Resources  
Councillor Alan Nicholls  
Councillor Nicholas John

In attendance: Xander Halliwell, Head of the Administrator's Office  
Siobhan Stewart, Clerk to Council

Apologies: Councillor Andrew Ellick  
Councillor Kitty George  
Councillors Douglas Miller  
Carl Mackerras, Head of the Administrator's Office

The Administrator welcomed all parties and thanked everyone for attending. The Administrator welcomed HE the Governor, Dr Philip Rushbrook, back to Ascension Island. Councillors were offered the opportunity to meet on a one to one basis with Governor Rushbrook. The Administrator thanked the Head of the Administrators Office (HoAO), Xander Halliwell for his hard work in the role of Acting Administrator in his absence, noting that the new HoAO, Carl Mackerras, is now on island in compulsory isolation.

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

- **Animal Welfare [pets]:** The Administrator was pleased to report that St Helena Government Senior Veterinary Officer, Joe Hollins and his Veterinary Assistant, Rico Williams visited Ascension Island on 05 January 2022 for a period of 24 hours. During that time over 20 animals were seen and treated. The DoR reported very positive feedback from pet owners and provided a brief overview of costs. The DoR explained that once all costs were covered, any excess will be donated to the Library and Resources Centre situated in Georgetown. Councillor John suggested that from an animal welfare point of view it should be mandatory for pet owners to book an appointment for their pet during periods when the vet is on island.
- **Connection Issues with telecommunications in the Courthouse:** The appropriate microphone and webcam system has been procured and is expected on the MOD FIRS in February 2022.
- **Progress of Employment Legislation and estimated timeline requested:** The consultation on proposed implementation plan with employers concluded with no significant comments made with regard to the proposed timelines for provisions coming into effect. The Policy Officer is now therefore working closely with the Attorney General's chambers to instruct legislative drafters. Once drafted, secondary legislation will be introduced to bring into force the various provisions of the Employment Ordinance 2021 in line with the implementation schedule.
- **Queens Platinum Jubilee 2022:** Discussed later
- **Commemoration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the Falkland Islands:** Discussed later

The HoAO provided an update on the current **COVID-19** status of the island. The HoAO explained that the island is currently in Level 2 Orange, reporting that there are currently three persons who have returned positive COVID-19 PCR test results following arrival from the most recent A400 and USAF flights. The HoAO reported that due to both flights potentially having actively infectious persons on-board, arrivals from these two flights will remain in quarantine for an additional 48 hours on top of the original eight days.

The HoAO reported that 762 booster vaccines have been given to date. Discussion was had regarding the extremely low vaccine refusal rates. HE, the Governor emphasised the importance of not allowing any vaccine wastage. Further conversation was had regarding future vaccines for five to 11 year olds and theoretically being able to utilise the current vaccine stock rather than waiting on smaller packed doses. Councillor John requested an update on the 12-17 year old category vaccine roll out and whether a second dose would be offered. The HoAO explained that when authorised by the UKHSA 12-17 year olds would be offered a second dose after a suitable time after the last dose.

The HoAO gave an update on the **runway project** reporting that due to bad weather the MV Inthira Naree offloading is progressing slower than expected, with only 12 days download activity out of a possible 23 days to date. MV Inthira Naree is expected to remain in Clarence Bay until 08 February 2022, the same week the MOD FIRS is expected to arrive in Ascension. The HoAO reported that Sunday working has been authorised during the month of January until 06 February to allow for offloading to continue prior to the scheduled fuel pipeline maintenance starting on the 09 February to 04 March 2022. Despite requests being made and authorisation being given for offloading to continue during the festive period, this was not possible due to unfavourable sea conditions. The Administrator reported that following a meeting with Lt Col Adams and the Governor, feedback was positive on the projects continued progress. Further discussion was had regarding civilian aircraft payload considerations and night time landing. Councillor Nicholls requested an update on the project completion percentage, the HoAO explained that transition to work on the Western end of the runway is expected to take place in April, with the full length of the runway expected to be completed about 12 months later.

The DoR provided a brief update on the resumption of the Airlink flight, and the predicted schedule for Ascension, reporting that a formal schedule is expected shortly. Following this, additional flights will be requested during the summer and winter holidays. Councillor John reported that the BoSH have requested priority seating to facilitate them going paperless. The DoR acknowledged this request, however the January, February and beginning of March flights are all fully booked at present.

Councillor Nicholls provided Council with an update on his recent attendance at the **Joint Ministerial Council (JMC)** that took place on 16 and 17 November 2021 in London, as well as a UKOTA meeting held on 15 November 2021. Councillor Nicholls reported on the importance of meeting with fellow Overseas Territory (OT) representatives, Government Ministers and other officials to discuss shared concerns and celebrate the unique relationship. Councillor Nicholls thanked Policy, Projects and Communications Officer, Alasdair Bain, for his assistance before and during the JMC. Topics covered were Environment and Oceans, Economic Resilience, Security and Law Enforcement and Health, UK-OT's Relationship, Mental Health and Inclusivity. Councillor Nicholls provided a brief update on each of the topics that were covered and the interventions made. Councillor Nicholls explained that the planned intervention for mental health and protecting the vulnerable did not take place as the previous topic overran. Councillor John encouraged the sharing of information and best practices in relation to mental health and child welfare across all the OT's Councillor Nicholls also reported on a productive Bilateral meeting with The Rt Hon Amanda Milling, the Minister for the OT's.

Councillor Nicholls highlighted several matters worthy of note, such as Minister Milling's attendance throughout the duration of the JMC and the Duke of Cambridge's attendance where he met with the Ascension Island young person representative, Ms Terri Nicholls, who had recently completed her first class honours degree in Environmental Resource Management and now volunteers in the sustainable farming sector.

Further discussion was had regarding the AIG's financial reserves and how OTs should use their own funds in the first instance, however, the UK will continue to consider all requests for funds on a case by case basis. Further discussion was had regarding the building of a new hospital in Ascension. The Administrator explained that a five year expenditure plan is currently underway, which will be shared with Councillors when complete. The Administrator thanked Councillor Nicholls for attending what was a successful JMC and for his comprehensive report afterwards. Councillor John thanked both Councillor Nicholls and Alasdair Bain for their attendance and contribution.

There was six items of **other business**:

- i. **Jubilee Celebrations 02 – 04 June 2022:** HE the Governor was pleased to announce that he had recently made a proclamation that Friday, 03 June 2022 shall be observed as a Public Holiday to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in St Helena and Ascension Island. HE the Governor highlighted the unique

opportunity to celebrate such a special and rare occasion. A brief description of activities that were being planned in St Helena was provided. HE the Governor encouraged plans to be made for Ascension now to allow sufficient time for planning and ordering. The Governor requested that Councillors consider how they would like the occasion to be celebrated in Ascension, in particular a lasting gesture. Councillor George submitted suggestions such as a food market, street party's and a tree planting ceremony prior to the meeting. Councillor Nicholls recommended that a committee be formed to organise the event, as has been done in previous years. Councillor John recommended that someone is appointed to lead and manage the organising of the event. Council were in agreement to have a lead person appointed who is advised by the committee, recommending that one person from each employing organisation form the committee.

- ii. **Commemoration of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the liberations of the Falkland Islands:** The Administrator is liaising directly with the RAF and welcomed any suggestions from Councillors as to how they would like to see the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemorated on Ascension Island. It was recommended that the appointed lead for the Jubilee Celebrations also organise this.
- iii. **Offloading of aggregate on Sunday's:** Councillor Nicholls reported of a recent complaint received from a member of the community following the release of a Public Notice notifying the public of the AIG's decision to allow aggregate offloading on Public Holidays over the festive period. The complaint referenced the late communication of the notice and concern over the AIG continually granting these additional working days, which affects members of the community living in the vicinity of the offloading. The Administrator explained that although additional working days have been granted, often, no offloading has taken place on those days due to unfavourable sea conditions, which was the case over the festive period. Subsequently, the AIG has since authorised Sunday working throughout the month of January to 06 February 2022. The Administrator explained that there have been no other complaints received from the public.
- iv. **Mexican Thorn Project:** Councillor Nicholls expressed concern over the recent AIG Public Notice regarding the Mexican Thorn Project, specifically the mention of biological controls. Councillor Nicholls requested details around the project, highlighting that Council were not made aware of the project, regardless of whether the project was Darwin funded or not. The Administrator agreed to look into the communications provided and report back.
- v. **Rats at One Boat Dump:** Councillor John reported of an increase in sightings of rats at the One Boat Dump, encouraging consideration of alternative pesticides as the poison currently used seems to be ineffective. Further discussion was had regarding the disposal of waste on the island. HE Governor Rushbrook expressed concern over the continued practice on island of open pit burning, recommending liaising with St Helena Waste Management Team to compare strategies.
- vi. **MOD to become a smoke free estate:** The HoAO reported that the MOD will soon become a smoke free estate, starting with the Air Terminal and surrounding buildings, followed by Travellers Hill during 2022, in line with the MOD's global initiative. Check-in times are expected to be reduced at the air terminal soon to limit time at the air terminal waiting for flights.

The meeting closed at 18:50

Siobhan Stewart  
Clerk of Council