

ASCENSION ISLAND GOVERNMENT

Clerk of Council's Office
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Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council

17:00 on Thursday 10 March 2022 at the Courthouse

MINUTES

Present: HH Sean Burns, Administrator
HE Dr Philip Rushbrook, Governor [remotely]
Allen Cansick, Attorney General [remotely]
Gareth Morris, Director of Resources
Councillor Andrew Ellick
Councillor Kitty George
Councillor Nicholas John
Councillor Douglas Miller
Councillor Alan Nicholls

In attendance: Carl Mackerras, Head of the Administrator's Office
Siobhan Stewart, Clerk of Council

Apologies: FCDO Desk Officer, Luke Atkinson

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 03 February 2022 was accepted with one feedback comment received. In accordance with the Council Rules these had already been agreed by Council members and published on 21 February 2022.

3. Matters arising

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

- **Progress of Employment Legislation:** Following further work between the Policy Officer and the legislative drafter, a draft of the proposed Regulations was shared with the AGs chambers on 04 March 2022. Once this has been finalised and agreed the Regulations can be made. Ahead of this, officials will be updating employers to ensure they are aware of the expected introduction timeline. The Attorney General confirmed receipt of the draft, which would be reviewed as expeditiously as possible.
- **Proclamation of new coin designs:** The Administrator confirmed that all proclamations for new coin designs are gazetted. The DoR explained that occasionally there are delays in the formal proclamations being submitted for gazetting due to multiple design amendments.
- **ITT Process for the buildings previously known as the Obsidian Hotel:** The Administrator confirmed that officials are looking into this with a view to engaging an expert to advise the AIG on the best tendering process. Councillor Nicholls recommended consultation with colleagues in St Helena who may be able to assist. The Administrator explained that it is hoped that an expert in the tourism market will be able to advise the AIG on both maximising Ascension's potential, whilst identifying possible obstacles. Councillors Ellick and George conveyed their support in approaching someone external from the tourism sector to advise.

4. Budget Approval 2022/2023

The DoR provided a brief overview of how he intended to present the budget proposal to Councillors, highlighting that Councillors would be given the opportunity to ask questions and make comment prior to voting either for or against each recommendation to the Governor. The DoR provided a brief overview of the six memos and three legal documents provided to Council prior to today's meeting. The Business Levy memo explains the proposed reduction to the Business Levy and the change to the proportioning split based on employing organisations head counts and the head count of their dependants. The DoR pointed out the accompanying Business Levy amendment ordinance for Councillors consideration as well as the Legal Notice which will allow the proposed changes to the income tax threshold, if recommended by Councillors. The DoR explained that a property tax holiday for small tax paying businesses on island may offer some relief on their non-residential properties that are linked directly to the business. The DoR thanked Councillor Nicholls for taking the time to review both the memos and accompanying documents in great detail ahead of today meeting.

The DoR explained that the process for setting the budget for the 2022/23 financial year for the AIG started in August 2021 with an informal meeting of the Finance Committee where a timetable for the process as a whole was agreed, along with some core principles that would form the basis of decisions made around the budget proposal.

The DoR reported on the continuing improvement of the AIG operating position as well as the high levels of reserves held, which have contributed to an increase in confidence in the overall financial strength of the AIG.

The DoR described the rather cautious policy the AIG has followed to ensure financial health by holding a reserve amount equal to between six to 12 months of expenditure. At year end of 2020/2021 the AIG held 17 months of expenditure in reserves, well above the amount suggested by external auditors. The DoR acknowledged that the policy for reserves held should be reviewed with external assistance, although it is expected advice would only lower the advised amounts that should be held.

The DoR explained that given the strong reserve position the Finance Committee had agreed that substantial investment in capital improvements could be afforded and should be considered. However the Finance Committee were also keen to stress that money should not just be spent for the sake of using up reserves and that strong business cases would still require scrutiny before spending was approved. The DoR reported on the Finance Committee's agreement that the high level of reserves and forecast operational surplus's for this year and future years presented the opportunity to reduce the tax burden on both Employees and Employing Organisations. It was agreed proposals on reducing the tax burden across different stakeholders should be considered.

Although the current forecast financial position for future years presents a positive outlook, the Finance Committee agreed that it was still important to keep control of operational spending. While it was acknowledged there would be inflationary cost pressures, and cases for increases to budgets alongside operational headcount, it was strongly felt there was still a very real need to prevent excessive increases to Operational expenditure at this time.

The DoR explained that the Finance Committee met informally a further four times since the initial budget setting meeting, scrutinising the Operational Budget, considering proposals on changes to the current tax regime, and appraising potential bids for capital expenditure. The DoR thanked all Finance Committee members for their hard work and diligence over the last few months, that had brought them to a position where he can today put forward an overall budget request on behalf of the Finance Committee and ask the Council to make a recommendation to the Governor.

The DoR provided a summary of the budget pack showing the forecast revenue within the budget proposal

as being 1.7% lower than that budgeted for 21/22, and 12.7% lower than that forecast for the same year. The forecast lower revenue within the proposal takes account of an expected drop in revenues after the completion of the runway project and an expected reduction in contractors on island. For forecast purposes any expected upturn on island as a result of the recommencement of the South Atlantic Airbridge has been accounted for cautiously. Finally the DoR explained that the lower forecast revenue also takes account of suggested tax adjustments listed in the accompanying memos provided which Councillors are invited to recommend. The recommendations suggested have attempted to provide benefits to a whole range of stakeholders on island.

(i) Business Levy

The DoR introduced the first memo and explained that the recommendation relates to an adjustment to the Business Levy and asks Councillors to recommend a £211k reduction to the Levy. The Business Levy charged to the main Employing Organisations operating in Ascension was increased in April 2020 by 27%, a rise of around £400k. That was the first increase in 5 years. The DoR explained that during the 2020/2021 discussions around the increase to the Business Levy the AIG produced a strong case to Employing Organisations to back the need for an increase given the time over which it had remained frozen, but also stressed a willingness to continually review the financial position on the understanding the Business Levy could/should be reduced as well as increased based on the operational need. The DoR proposed that the current financial position dictates that a reduction of the Business Levy would be a fair and proper course of action to take. Councillor George conveyed her hope that following a recommendation to reduce the Business Levy, utility costs would not need to be increased.

The DoR asked each Councillor in turn if they are happy to take the proposal of a £211k reduction to the Business Levy forward as a recommendation to the Governor.

	Proposal	AE	KG	NJ	DM	AN
1	Business Levy decrease	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

HE the Governor acknowledged Councillors recommendation and accepted.

(ii) Income Tax

The DoR moved onto the second memo and highlighted that the recommendation is for changes to the Income Tax Ordinance. Income Tax is the biggest source of revenue for the AIG, forecasting to contribute approximately £4m in revenue in financial year 21/22.

The DoR reported that the current Income Tax system comprises of a tax free allowance of £3,500 per individual, and two tax rates of 15% for the next £4,000 earned and 27% for all further earnings. These tax rates have been in place and not altered since 2002, over which time average earnings have moved substantially. The DoR explained that as part of this year’s budget work the Finance Committee would like to suggest an adjustment and rise in the lower rate tax threshold from £4,000 to £6,000. This adjustment would benefit tax payers by £240 each per annum, though reduce potential revenues by approximately £195k, with the impact falling to approximately £150k by 2023/24 with the expected decrease in contractors associated with the runway project. The DoR confirmed that as the tax rates and thresholds have not been adjusted since 2002, the Finance Committee believe this adjustment is overdue, and should be deemed a first step ahead of a further more comprehensive review of Tax rates and thresholds. Councillor Nicholls highlighted that each Councillor other than himself has an interest in the increasing of the income tax threshold as they are employed and therefore directly affected by the increase. Councillor John highlighted that as Councillor Nicholls is a dependant of a working individual on Ascension Island, he too would have an interest in this increase. The DoR noted that Councillor Miller is employed by Mitie and his employer pays his tax, so he has no interest to declare. The remaining Councillors declared their conflict of interest, however Councillor John highlighted the responsibility each Councillor has to the constituents of Ascension Island and how the increase was moderate and reasonable. Councillor George conveyed her

thanks and support from each and every tax payer on Ascension Island for this recommendation.

The DoR asked each Councillor in turn if they are happy to take the proposal of an adjustment to lower tax rate threshold from £4,000 up to £6,000 forward as a recommendation to the Governor.

	Proposal	AE	KG	NJ	DM	AN
2	Income Tax rate threshold increase	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

HE the Governor acknowledged Councillors recommendation and accepted.

(iii) Corporation Tax

Also covered within the Income Tax Ordinance is the rate charged for Corporation Tax, currently 19% and matched to the UK rate. The DoR explained that in line with the aim to decrease the tax burden to benefit of all stakeholders it is recommended that a decrease of 1% to the chargeable rate, with an expected initial impact of just over £20k less revenue for the AIG per annum, benefiting Corporation Tax payers by the same amount per year. The DoR explained that this reduction would not only benefit those liable for the tax, helping to discourage price increases, it could also make Ascension more attractive as a base for profit making activity. Councillor Nicholls conveyed his support of the adjustment to the Corporation Tax, noting that it may encourage companies to declare their earnings differently and ultimately benefit the AIG.

The DoR asked each Councillor in turn if they are happy to take the proposal of an adjustment to Corporation Tax rate from 19% to 18% forward as a recommendation to the Governor?

	Proposal	AE	KG	NJ	DM	AN
3	Corporation Tax decrease	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

HE the Governor acknowledged Councillors recommendation and accepted.

(iv) Property Tax

The DoR explained that as part of the 2020/21 budget a property tax holiday was introduced for small tax paying business's resulting in a reduction to revenues of approximately £9k per annum. As part of the budget setting process for 22/23 the DoR asked for this again to be considered, helping to encourage more small businesses and hopefully discouraging the need for price increases that will impact on customers. The DoR pointed out that if approved a Legal Notice will be prepared, similarly to the Legal Notice for the Income Tax Ordinance. Whilst Councillor John supported the property tax holiday, he requested clarity on the definition of a small tax paying business, highlighting that larger businesses may now wish to claim a tax holiday also. The DoR explained that a small business is defined as an on island tax paying business that are not paying corporation tax, noting that the tax relief would only apply to the premises that they operate from, not on residential properties. Councillor George asked if eligible small businesses were already on a property tax holiday, the DoR confirmed that they were not. Councillor George conveyed her support of the property tax holiday, adding that times have been particularly difficult for small business's following the cessation of the RMS and the suspension of the airbridge, with some small business's having since closed. Councillor George emphasised the importance of supporting small businesses on Ascension as well as encouraging new businesses to open. Councillor John explained that previously there has been concern over definition of small businesses and how the line is drawn as to which businesses can claim the tax holiday and which businesses can't. The DoR explained that larger companies have been given concessions in other ways, such as the Business Levy.

The DoR asked each Councillor in turn if they are happy to take the proposal of a property tax holiday for small tax paying businesses for the 2022/23 financial year forward as a recommendation to the Governor? Councillor Ellick declared an interest and abstained.

	Proposal	AE	KG	NJ	DM	AN
4	Property tax holiday	Abstained	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

HE the Governor acknowledged Councillors recommendation and accepted, however the Governor requested confirmation of the expected revenue in 2022/2023, the DoR confirmed the figure should read £10k, agreeing to amend the figure in the memo. HE the Governor encouraged Councillors to consider whether this tax was necessary considering the small revenue it provides the AIG, however he noted that revenue may increase following the return of the airbridge should businesses expand. Councillor Nicholls highlighted that following the return of the airbridge, if businesses were to do well it may provide more substantial revenue to the AIG and therefore any further changes should be considered carefully. The DoR explained that it is one of the AIG's strategic objectives to review the Land and Business Policy where small business property tax will also be captured.

(v) **2022/2023 operational Budget Appropriation**

The DoR explained that the operational budgets across the AIG have been scrutinised and where possible efficiencies and savings made. However with the financial health of the AIG improving the DoR recommended that the emphasis needs to change from purely looking to save money, to instead looking to invest in services.

The DoR recommended the proposal for an appropriation to the Consolidated Fund of £6,943k which is 3.9% or £258k increase on the 21/22 financial year. The DoR explained that much of this increase can be attributed to inflationary pressures brought about by rising global prices, and increases in travel, fuel and utility costs. The AIG have also looked to invest in operational areas to help with key projects and particularly maintenance of public areas, as well as further investment for Environmental Health. The DoR confirmed that overall the current request would see an increase to headcount across the AIG of 2.3 FTE as shown on sheet 2 of the budget pack.

The DoR directed Councillors to sheet 4 of the budget pack which shows the projections for cashflow, forecasting an operating surplus for the 22/23 financial year of over £205k with the current suggested appropriation and current suggested tax amendments. The DoR explained that figures have been inflated for future years and still forecast operational surpluses up to the 25/26 financial year. These forecasts do not account for any additional significant investments in operational capacity, though it is acknowledged these may be needed in future years particularly if the recommencement of the south Atlantic Airbridge brings a significant increase in activity. The DoR reported that any such increase would also likely bring an increase in revenues, which at this time has not been included in current projections either.

The DoR asked each Councillor in turn if they are happy to take the proposal for an appropriation of £6,943k for operational expenditure to the Consolidated Fund for the 2022/23 financial year forward as a recommendation to the Governor?

	Proposal	AE	KG	NJ	DM	AN
5	Appropriation of £6,943k for operational expenditure	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

HE the Governor acknowledged Councillors recommendation and accepted based on the figures within the budget pack and memo of £6,943k, noting that the figure in the Draft Appropriation Ordinance under clause 2 will need amending from £6,694k to £6,943k. The DoR confirmed that the recommended changes would be made.

(vi) **Capital Expenditure**

The DoR reported that in light of the strong level of reserves and obvious needs for infrastructure improvements across the island, the AIG have brought forward several projects for consideration. The Finance Committee have provided scrutiny and feedback on proposed projects, reviewing business cases

and suggesting amendments and additions.

The DoR directed Councillors to Sheet five of the budget pack which summarises the capital bids being bought forward for funding approval totalling just over £1,000k. These bids include requests for significant funding for a school estate improvement project, painting of public buildings, and significant maintenance on the Green Mountain Road. Other smaller projects cover repairs and maintenance to Georgetown Pool, the repair of the historic Red Lion archway, and improvements to the Two Boats Village Playpark. Further investment requests cover the replacement of trailers and tractor unit, an inshore sea rescue vessel and a cancer screening project to be run from Georgetown Hospital.

Other investments have been discussed at previous Finance Committee Meetings, and paused for the time being. These include the renovation of Garden Cottage, the replacement of further vehicles within the AIG fleet, and the possible purchase of further fleet vehicles to support both Plant and Public Maintenance. The DoR confirmed that these requests may be revisited in year as part of a Supplementary ask for funding later in the year.

The DoR asked each Councillor in turn if they are happy to take the proposal for an appropriation of £1,050k for capital expenditure to the Development Fund for the 2022/23 financial year forward as a recommendation to the Governor?

	Proposal	AE	KG	NJ	DM	AN
6	Appropriation of £1,050k for capital expenditure	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

HE the Governor acknowledged Councillors recommendation and accepted based on the figures within the budget pack and memo of £1,050k, noting that the figure in the Draft Appropriation Ordinance under clause 3 will need amending from £1,352k to £1,050k. The DoR confirmed the recommended changes would be made.

(vii) **Key Infrastructure Special Fund**

The DoR highlighted that alongside ambitious capital investment plans for the next few years, there is also a strong need for investment in two key infrastructure areas that have been identified as major priorities for Ascension Island. These priorities are for a new hospital and for a complete road replacement project. Unfortunately neither of these projects are likely to take place, or even start in the 22/23 financial year.

The DoR explained that even with the ambitious capital investment plans for the next few years the high level of reserves held still exceeds an advisable level, and as such may hamper bids for external funding.

Both the road and hospital replacement projects will require significant investment and in likelihood the need for external funds to contribute towards the project. The DoR explained that securing such funding will no doubt be a challenge, but would be helped significantly if the AIG can show they are able to make a significant contribution themselves. The DoR confirmed that a special fund has been setup to hold/ring-fence funds that this Council may commit towards these projects.

The feasibility study for a new hospital suggested costs may be as high as £16m - £20m, while early indications are that the cost of the road replacement project could cost at least £2m. The DoR asked Councillors to show commitment to these two key projects by identifying funds now that ensure they visibly remain a key priority. A commitment of 50% of the estimated cost of the road the replacement project, and 15% of the estimated cost of the hospital replacement project would total £3.5m. Councillor Nicholls requested clarity on the process of moving the funds from the Key Infrastructure Special Fund back to the Consolidated Fund should the AIG find itself in unexpected financial difficulty, The DoR confirmed that it can be returned to the Consolidated Fund following recommendation from the Finance Committee. The Administrator highlighted that following this year's general election a new Council may wish for the funds to be moved, however the DoR explained that the funds can only remain in the special

fund until 2025/2026 financial year, where any funds remaining will automatically return to the Consolidated Fund. Whilst Councillor John was content to move forward on this, he would like to see written confirmation in the future of the recommended reserve levels of the AIG.

The DoR asked each Councillor in turn if they are happy to take the proposal for the appropriation of £3,500k for key priority project expenditure to the Key Infrastructure Special Fund for the 2022/23 financial year forward as a recommendation to the Governor?

	Proposal	AE	KG	NJ	DM	AN
7	Key Infrastructure Special Fund	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

HE the Governor acknowledged Councillors recommendation and accepted.

(viii) Appropriation Ordinance

The DoR asked each Councillor in turn if they are happy to take the proposal for the Appropriation Ordinance for the 2022/23 financial year forward as a recommendation to the Governor following the amendment of clause 2 from £6,694k to £6,943k and Clause 3 from £1,352k to £1,050k.

	Proposal	AE	KG	NJ	DM	AN
8	Appropriation Ordinance 2022/23	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

HE the Governor acknowledged Councillors recommendation and accepted.

(ix) Business Levy Amendment Ordinance

The DoR asked each Councillor in turn if they are happy to take the proposal for the Business Levy Amendment Ordinance for the 2022/23 financial year forward as a recommendation to the Governor?

	Proposal	AE	KG	NJ	DM	AN
9	Business Levy Amendment Ordinance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

HE the Governor acknowledged Councillors recommendation and accepted.

(x) Income Tax Legal Notice

The DoR asked each Councillor in turn if they are happy to take the proposal for the Income Tax Legal Notice forward as a recommendation to the Governor?

	Proposal	AE	KG	NJ	DM	AN
10	Income Tax Legal Notice	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

HE the Governor acknowledged Councillors recommendation and accepted.

(xi) Overall positions

	Proposal	AE	KG	NJ	DM	AN
1	Business Levy decrease	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Income Tax threshold increase	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Corporation Tax decrease	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Property tax holiday	Abstained	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	Appropriation of £6,943k for operational expenditure	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Appropriation of £1,050k for capital expenditure	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

7	Key Infrastructure Special Fund	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
8	Appropriation Ordinance 2022/23	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9	Business Levy Amendment Ordinance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
10	Income Tax Legal Notice	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The DoR thanked Councillors for their hard work and contributions throughout the budget setting process and for the decisions that have been made today. Councillor John thanks the DoR for his creativity and hard work in creating this year's excellent budget proposal. The Administrator thanked the DoR, the finance team, the Finance Committee and all Councillors for their time and hard work in creating an imaginative budget, recognising the improvement in the AIG's financial position that will benefit a whole range of stakeholders on island. Councillor Nicholls conveyed his thanks and appreciation to the DoR. HE the Governor also conveyed his thanks to the DoR for all he has done during his time on Ascension, wishing him all the very best in the future.

4. Coronavirus update [standing item]

The HoAO provided an update about **coronavirus** (COVID-19). The HoAO reported that the Response Level has been increased from Level 1 Amber to Level 2 Orange following a positive COVID-19 test result from an individual in compulsory isolation, having arrived at Ascension on Tuesday 08 March 2022 on a flight from St Helena, which had departed the UK the day before. As a result of the positive case being identified all passengers arriving in Ascension on this flight were required to complete an eight day period of compulsory isolation, including passengers who embarked in St Helena. The HoAO confirmed that there have been no further positive cases identified from other passengers on either the Titan flight on 08 March 2022 or the A400 that arrived on 09 March 2022. A review of segregation processes on this Titan flight will take place, however it was noted that this was the final Titan flight to Ascension Island.

The HoAO was pleased to report that 100 paediatric doses of vaccine arrive on the A400 on 09 March 2022, and following review of storage temperatures en route the vaccines were approved for use. Georgetown Hospital will be contacting all relevant parents soon to provide information about the paediatric does, with the intention of beginning the vaccination programme next week.

Councillor John asked if it would be possible for passengers originating from the UK to receive a PCR test upon arrival in St Helena, prior to passengers embarking in St Helena bound for Ascension. The Administrator explained that due to limited time and resources it is unlikely that this would be possible or practical. Further discussion was had as to what would happen if a passenger were to test positive in St Helena and the implications this may have.

The Administrator explained that the flight crew of the Airlink have requested not have to do COVID-19 tests on Ascension upon arrival as it might restrict their ability to enter South Africa were any to test positive. Councillor George requested clarity as to how this will affect travel corridor between Ascension Island and St Helena and whether isolation will be reintroduced as a result of the lack of testing for the crew. The Administrator explained that crew protocols will change to reflect this, such as social distancing from passengers and no inflight catering services will be provided, similar as to what was agreed with Titan and should have been in place. At present it is expected that non St Helena passengers will still be tested on arrival. Councillor George strongly recommended that these protocols are enforced stringently to ensure we avoid a similar situation as to what has happened on the recent Titan flight. Councillor Ellick conveyed his dismay at the protocols not being followed on the most recent Titan flight, adding that due to no passenger segregation on the flight passengers were at a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19. Councillor Ellick encouraged enforcement of the protocols to ensure this doesn't happen again. The Administrator urged caution when insisting Airlink introduce certain protocols, highlighting that if Airlink believe these are unworkable for them, they may simply say they are unable to meet the requirements set by the AIG and therefor can no longer provide a service to Ascension Island. Councillor Nicholls requested clarity as to whether pre-departure tests will be a requirement on Airlink from South Africa, the Administrator confirmed that a pre-departure test remains a requirement of St Helena, and will remain a

requirement of Ascension also. The DoR explained that the AIG have the benefit of being able to allocate seating for passengers on the Airlink which may be beneficial in reducing the risk of exposure, and ensuring the separation of passengers. Councillor Ellick encouraged protocols and standards to remain high especially considering children aged five to 11 years old are currently unvaccinated.

5. Runway project update [standing item]

The HoAO provided an update on the runway project, reporting that the process around the approval testing of the asphalt mix is ongoing and will ensure quality, strength and durability, however this had not so far impacted the overall completion date. The next aggregate ship is expected to arrive at Ascension on Monday 21 March 2022. The HoAO also reported of the recent article published in the St Helena Independent detailing the runway projects progress and introducing Major Harrizon Sanchez, ahead of Major Burkett's departure from Ascension next week.

6. Queen's Platinum Jubilee 2022 [standing item]

The Administrator provided an update to Council on progress being made for the Queens Platinum Jubilee celebrations in Ascension, noting that the next meeting of the board is scheduled for Monday 14 March 2022 at 16:00. A request has been submitted to the Commonwealth Mint regarding the procurement of coin mementos for children on Ascension.

7. Any other business

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

- (i) Sheep in Two Boats Village:** Councillor Nicholls reported that at a recent public meeting held by the Governor at Two Boats, a resident of Two Boats expressed serious concern about sheep in the village, and the damage that they are doing to the area. Councillor Nicholls explained that since then, a number of other residents have also complained about the sheep in Two Boats citing a number of concerns. Reports have been received of sheep both damaging and destroying the vegetation in the village, with particular mention of the destruction to Two Boats Club hedge. Complaints have been received of the sheep urinating and defecating throughout the village, highlighting that this is not pleasant, especially when taking into account the fact that people and children travel and play throughout the area. With the majority of properties in Two Boats Village not having a fence around the entire circumference of the houses, it had led to the sheep being able to get right next to resident's bedrooms. The close proximity of the sheep to property bedrooms has created a nuisance from noise and smell from urine. On many occasions, residents have been awoken from sleep by the noise of the sheep, reports have also been received of sleeping children being woken and frightened by the noise of the sheep outside. One resident indicated that he thought that fighting rams were going to break through the fence at the front of his property. Councillor Nicholls explained that other than the nuisance and damage being caused by the sheep in the village, concern had also been raised regarding the health and welfare of the sheep generally. One resident had indicated that they have heard sheep coughing and spluttering, sometimes for long periods of time. The physical state of some of the sheep also calls into question whether they are fit and well. The health of the sheep also has implications for the health of the children in Two Boats, where small children play freely in the area and could quite easily come into contact with things that have been in contact with sick sheep, or sheep that may be infested with parasites. Councillor Nicholls conveyed his strong support for some form of action to eradicate the sheep from Two Boats Village, either by removing them and replacing the fence around the village or by culling, although it was noted that culling is likely to be an emotive suggestion, so perhaps removal and replacing the fence might be the more sensible option. Councillor George explained that similar problems have been raised and

were addressed by volunteers at the time who repaired the fence around the village. Councillor Ellick explained that in recent Finance Committee meetings a head count increase was agreed to assist with the tidying of Two Boats Village and Georgetown. Councillor Miller reported that Mitie are currently tendering interest for external contractors to assist in the eradication of sheep on Travellers Hill also.

- (ii) **Attendance at virtual meeting with Minister Milling – Re: Russian Sanctions:** Councillor Nicholls reported that the Rt Hon Minister Milling will be holding a virtual meeting with all the Oversea Territories on **Monday 14 March at 15:00** regarding the implementation of UK sanctions against Russia by the OT's. Councillor Nicholls requested that Councillors confirm if they would be available. It was agreed that Councillor Nicholls, Councillor George and Councillor Ellick would attend.
- (iii) **Statement to issue by OT's regarding the implementation of UK Sanctions against Russia by the OT's:** Councillor Nicholls explained that The Premier of the TCI, Hon. Charles Washington Misick, would like to agree with all OT leaders a statement, on the implementation of UK sanctions against Russia by the Overseas Territories. Councillor Nicholls read out the following statement for Councillors approval.
The Governments of the United Kingdom (UK) Overseas Territories have followed with horror Russia's invasion of the sovereign democratic state of Ukraine. The Overseas Territories are in solidarity with the UK and the international community in denouncing Russia's military action against Ukraine.
In response to Russian military action against Ukraine the UK Government has imposed a series of sanctions against Russia, targeting its financial sector and the assets held by Russian politicians and oligarchs. All sanctions imposed against Russia by the UK have been extended to Overseas Territories, either through Orders in Council or through domestic legislation. The Overseas Territories have acted swiftly to fully implement the UK sanctions against Russia in their jurisdictions and are committed to continuing to uphold the highest international standards of transparency and accountability.
Councillors offered their support and approval of the above statement.
- (iv) **Luggage allowance following the recommencement of the Airlink:** Councillor Ellick requested confirmation on the agreed luggage allowance following the recommencement of the Airlink service, encouraging that consideration be given to increasing the allowances.
- (v) **Departure of the Director of Resources:** The Administrator conveyed his thanks to Gareth Morris, Director of Resources for all his support and hard work during his time in Ascension.

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 18:30

Siobhan Stewart
Clerk of Council

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



Sean Burns
On behalf of HE the Governor, Dr Philip Rushbrook