

## 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

10:00 on Tuesday 12 April 2022 at the Courthouse

### MEETING SUMMARY

Present: HH Sean Burns, Administrator  
Catherine Leo, Acting Director of Resources

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

In attendance: Carl Mackerras, Head of the Administrator's Office  
Siobhan Stewart, Clerk to Council  
Francesca Bennett, Clerk to Council  
Alasdair Bain, Policy, Projects and Communications Officer

Apologies:

The Administrator welcomed all parties and thanked everyone for their patience and flexibility, ensuring the Informal meeting went ahead before the upcoming Formal Meeting of the Ascension Island Council. The Administrator welcomed the Policy, Projects and Communications Officer, Alasdair Bain, and Francesca Bennett who will be covering the Clerk to Council role from April through to June. He also welcomed Catherine Leo, Acting Director of Resources, who will be covering the role of Director of Resources until the substantive appointment arrives in May 2022. Nigel Phillips had been confirmed as the next Governor of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha and this had been publicised on the UK Government website. The successor to the Administrator had also now received his letter of appointment, with more details on this to follow shortly. The changeover is likely to take place in October/November.

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

- **ITT Process for the buildings previously known as the Obsidian Hotel:** The Administrator reported that this action would remain on the actions tracker and will be actioned after the arrival of the Crown Counsel on 23 April 2022.

**Public Health (Coronavirus)(Temporary Measures) Regulations 2022:** The Policy Officer explained that the Public Health (Coronavirus)(Temporary Measures) Regulations 2020 were made into law on 17 April 2020, however given the broad scope of the powers provided for in the Regulations, an expiry date set 24 months from the date at which the regulations were introduced had been included. It was noted that Regulations have been vital in ensuring that the relevant authorities have been able to respond effectively, proportionately and consistently to the challenges and threats posed by the pandemic. They noted that although the powers provided were broad, AIG had strived to develop and publish a number of comprehensive policies and procedures which outline how these powers are deployed in practice, which in turn have safeguarded the community over the past 24 months, whilst ensuring that effective checks and balances are observed and individual's fundamental rights are protected.

The Policy Officer reported that AIG will seek to enact new Regulations which are identical to those introduced in 2020. In introducing these Regulations, AIG will ensure that the powers necessary to deal with the ongoing challenges posed by the pandemic, and those likely to lie ahead in the next 12 months are retained. However, the new Regulations will be limited to expire after 12 months as opposed to 24 months.

The Policy Officer reported that AIG intends to shortly publish a COVID-19 Emergence Strategy. This will seek to map a route out of the pandemic for Ascension and adapt many of the measures that have been in place since March 2020. Key options and directions will be discussed with employers to ensure the function of the implementation of the COVID-19 Emergence Strategy.

Councillor Ellick questioned whether such broad powers should be retained by officials rather than a wider collection of stakeholders. The Administrator noted that the process followed to date, led by the Senior Medical Officer, Administrator and Policy Officer in conjunction with the UK Health and Security Agency, had served Ascension well. It was noted that this had allowed for evidence based decision making in liaison with scientific experts, providing the ability to respond dynamically but effectively to the challenges of the last 24 months. Councillor George and Councillor Nicholls noted their agreement with the Administrator.

Councillor John inquired whether the medical practitioner that is referred to within the Regulations was strictly for the medical practitioners employed by AIG. The Policy Officer confirmed that it refers to any medical practitioner, whether employed by AIG or one of the military base clinics.

A discussion was had regarding communications between AIG and SHG in the event that a positive COVID-19 test is returned following the arrival of the Airlink. The Policy Officer explained that protocols are in place to ensure that this information is communicated to SHG and the Governor's office promptly, as it is to Councillors, before wider AIG communications go out to the general public immediately after. It was noted that SHG would then have their own internal procedures for communicating that information throughout their organisation, and to their own public.

**Employment Ordinance Implementation:** The Policy Projects and Communications Officer explained that work has been ongoing with the Attorney General Chambers, and discussions were had with colleagues to establish and discuss any outstanding issues with the current proposed Regulations. The Policy Officer informed Councillors that following this latest discussions the Attorney General's office had agreed to provide written legal advice to AIG. Discussion was had around what options would be taken depending on the written advice received.

Councillors expressed their disappointment and concern that the Employment Ordinance implementation remains outstanding despite the Ordinance being made into law in June 2021.

**COVID-19:** The HoAO provided an update on the current **COVID-19** status of the island. The HoAO explained that the island is currently in Level 1 Amber, with no individuals currently in compulsory isolation, confirming that there are currently no positive COVID-19 cases in Ascension. There was a 90% vaccine uptake for the first doses for 5 to 11 year olds and second doses for 12 to 18 year olds. The completion of vaccinations for these categories will be administered by the end of April 2022. The HoAO is still awaiting confirmation on whether the 20 doses of anti-viral therapeutic treatments for COVID-19 cases will arrive on the next A400.

The HoAO gave an update on the **runway project** reporting that an update on the asphalt mix is due on 16 April 2022, with possible approval likely during the first week of May 2022, following a period of strips testing which will be quality approved through the quality assurance process. It is currently scheduled that the change in construction to the western end of the runway will take place by the first week of August 2022, with completion of the runway by mid May 2023. Thereafter a period of demobilisation and road works will take place; this is due for completion by August 2023. The offloading of the current aggregate ship is going well and is due to leave Ascension on 27 April 2022.

The Acting Director of Resources provided an update on the **Queen's Platinum Jubilee** Celebrations following the recent meeting of the Platinum Jubilee Working Group on 04 April 2022. A T-Shirt design competition had taken place, and the chosen design had been printed. The T-Shirts are ready for delivery and will be sold prior to the event. The weekend commencing 28 May 2022 will see a number of activities take place. This will include a Dew Pond Run, tree planting organised by the Conservation and Fisheries Directorate with a reception at Green Mountain National Park, and a live Music Gala featuring music throughout the decades for which the Queen has been in reign will be held at Two Boats Club.

On the evening of Thursday 02 June 2022 there will be the lighting of a beacon at Jubilee View with a reception to follow. On Friday 03 June 2022 a Church Service will be held, as well as an Arts and Crafts exhibition which will be held at the Saints Members Club and a float parade is organised for the evening. Saturday 04 June 2022 will see a

reception hosted at the Residency followed by a street party on Sunday 05 June. The Platinum Jubilee Cup competition between organisations will begin Wednesday 20 April 2022 and continue until the week of the Jubilee celebrations.

The Administrator provided an update on the **Biodiversity strategy** explaining that AIG Conservation and Fisheries Directorate has prepared a draft Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan which provides an overview of how biodiversity will be protected in Ascension Island. The plan is designed to provide an accessible and general overview that will be supported by more detailed plans for specific protected areas or species groups. The Ascension Island Council has been given sight of the plan to allow for any suggestions or concerns to be raised ahead of the public consultation. The plan will be brought back to Council for consideration after the Public Consultation has concluded. Councillor Nicholls raised concerns about the action plan that suggests that all structures be removed from turtle nesting beaches and requested confirmation that this did not include the recreational and Barbeque areas, specifically at English Bay. The Administrator requested Councillors to send in any immediate concerns to the Director of Conservation and Fisheries.

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

- i. **Inter-island flight and Preferred Customer Agreement (PCA):** Councillor Ellick questioned whether 77 Construction have also been included in the PCA for Airlink operated inter-island flights. The Administrator confirmed that 77 Construction were not able to be included in the PCA due to limitations in operational capacity.
- ii. **Post via Airlink Flights:** Councillor Ellick asked why is there no letter mail permitted on the 25 April 2022 flight. Acting Director of Resources explained that flight payloads are worked out as an average per person and due to the flight being fully booked it is not possible to send any mail on this particular flight.
- iii. **Driving Licence:** Councillor Ellick inquired whether there has been an update on the different classes of driving licences. The Administrator confirmed that this will be looked into.
- iv. **Water facility at the Pier Head:** Councillor John queried the possibility of putting in a metered water connection at the pier head. A discussion was had about the possible options available. Acting Director of Resources mentioned that the newly formed Ascension Fishers Association has submitted a bid to the charity fund for various effects, including one for a coin metered fresh water pump.

The meeting closed at 11:20

Francesca Bennett  
Clerk of Council