

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

Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council

17:00 on Thursday 21 April 2022 at the Courthouse

MINUTES

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

In attendance: Siobhan Stewart, Clerk of Council
Francesca Bennett, Clerk of Council

Apologies: Luke Atkinson, FCDO Desk Officer
Carl Mackerras, Head of the Administrator's Office

1. Welcome

The Administrator welcomed all parties. The Administrator reported that Carl Mackerras, Head of the Administrator's Office, was currently on overseas leave. Siobhan Stewart, Clerk of Council, will also be away on overseas annual leave from Sunday 24 April 2022. The Administrator welcomed Francesca Bennett, who is covering as Clerk of Council, to the Formal Meeting of the Ascension Island Council. The Administrator explained that while Francesca is covering as Clerk to Ascension Island Council, Denise John will be covering the PA to Administrator role.

The Administrator informed that the provisional date for the **Joint Ministerial Council (JMC)** is 07 November 2022.

The Administrator provided an update on the **Falkland Island Resupply Ship (FIRS)**, noting that freight will be limited on the upcoming voyage. One of the scheduled ships that were due earlier this year was cancelled, creating a backlog of freight. Since then the usual type of ship contracted to conduct FIRS voyages, the 'roll on roll off' type has been redeployed for other duties. The replacement ship, which is a 'load on load off', is smaller and carries less freight. It has therefore been necessary for everyone to prioritise freight; this also includes the Falkland Islands, military and private freight. The Administrator explained that the Ascension Island Government is working closely with Richard James International and others to prioritise the freight that will arrive on the next FIRS ship. It was confirmed that food supplies, fuel and pharmaceuticals, as well as any critical spares or kit that are required for any of the organisations will take priority. Unfortunately on this voyage there will be no AIG break bulk cargo or vehicles (including private). It is anticipated that the service could revert to a roll on roll off vessel in July but this is not guaranteed. The Administrator informed that the AIG are exploring potential alternatives with costs and logistics for shipping containers from the UK to Cape Town and then onto Ascension via the MV Helena. The Administrator informed that the freight limitations could continue for a few months, due to ongoing world events. The Administrator reminded everyone that the FIRS is an MOD operated service and while the island generally has continued to benefit from this in terms of freight, the support of military operations will always take priority. It was also explained that Richard James International has modified the order in which their containers are packed, ensuring that containers with prioritised goods are readily identified. The Administrator highlighted that this is out of the control of the military on Ascension and requested that any enquiries from the public are sent to the Administrator's office to address. Councillor Nicholls expressed concern around the increase of world freight costs and the recent issues with the loading and off-loading of containers in Cape Town. Councillor George agreed and explained that every MV Helena

voyage for 2022 has been delayed due to the delay of transhipments.

2. Approval of Minutes

Decision: The summary of the Informal Council meeting held on 24 February 2022 were accepted with one feedback comment received. In accordance with the Council Rules these had already been agreed by Council members and published on 09 March 2022.

Decision: The minutes of the Formal Council meeting held on 03 March 2022 were accepted with no feedback comment received. In accordance with the Council Rules these had already been agreed by Council members and published on 18 March 2022.

Decision: The summary of the Informal Council meeting held on 10 March 2022 were accepted with no feedback comment received. In accordance with the Council Rules these had already been agreed by Council members and published on 29 March 2022.

3. Matters arising

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

- **Progress of Employment Legislation:** The Administrator reported that on 20 April 2022, legal advice on the Employment Legislation had been received from the Attorney-General's Chambers. The advice received was being considered by AIG officials, but mainly suggested minor amendments be made to the Employment Ordinance itself, rather than through the introduction of secondary Regulations. This was with a view to mitigating risk to employers that might arise through the application of certain elements of the secondary legislation only to new employees rather than to all. The advice also highlighted some other areas for clarification in the Ordinance itself, which AIG is considering. The timeline of completion of the legislative amendments by the Attorney-General's Chambers for the minor amendments is 05 May 2022. The Administrator confirmed that once the amended draft of the Employment Ordinance has been received it will then be circulated to Councillors for approval before being sent to the Governor for signing into law.
- **ITT Process for the buildings previously known as the Obsidian Hotel:** The Administrator confirmed that this will be actioned after the arrival of the Crown Counsel on 23 April 2022.
- **Driving Licence, Class of Vehicles:** The Administrator has confirmed that a response has been sent to Mitie. There will be a follow up meeting after the arrival of Crown Counsel.

4. Coronavirus update [standing item]

The Administrator provided an update on the current **COVID-19** status of the island. The Administrator informed councillors that the Public Health (Coronavirus)(Temporary Provisions) Regulations, 2022 will expire after four months and not 12 months as originally proposed. As previously noted, it is expected that the development of Ascension's COVID-19 Emerging Strategy to open up the island will inform how long these powers will need to be retained for, and given the breadth of the powers provided to authorities, it is sensible that these are reviewed once again in a timely fashion.

The Administrator explained that the Senior Medical Officer and Policy, Project and Communications Officer have been in discussion about reviewing and adapting the COVID-19 protocols currently in place. Information on the change in protocols will be circulated shortly once this has been fleshed out in more detail. At present, consideration is being given to implement changes following the July 2022 school holidays, ensuring that the travel corridor with St Helena remains open during the peak period of travel. The Administrator will follow up on whether the 20 doses of anti-viral therapeutic treatments for COVID-19 cases have arrived. The Administrator confirmed that 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.

5. Runway Project [standing item]

The Administrator gave an update on the **runway project**, reporting that an update on the asphalt mix is due 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 still currently scheduled that the completion of the runway is mid May 2023. The offloading of the current aggregate ship is going well and is due to leave Ascension on 27 April 2022. Two further aggregate ships are due before Schuyler completes their works around October 2022.

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

The Acting Director of Resources provided an update on the **Queen's Platinum Jubilee** Celebrations, confirming that The Platinum Jubilee Cup competition between organisations began Wednesday 20 April 2022 and continues with one event per week until the week of the Jubilee celebrations. There has been interest from the public to hold various stalls at the Street Party on Sunday 05 June. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee T-Shirts have arrived on Island and have been advertised. A further meeting with the Platinum Jubilee Working Group will take place 02 May 2022. The Acting Director of Resources explained that volunteers are needed for the various events which include marshals and time keepers for the Dew Pond Run. The Administrator confirmed that both the plaque for the Tree Planting Ceremony at Green Mountain National Park and emergency service medals have now arrived on island. The Acting Director of Resources explained that the RAF is currently organising the delivery of fireworks to the island.

7. Any other business

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

- i. **The future of Ascension Island:** Councillor Nicholls asked if there was an update on the future of Ascension Island. The Administrator explained that the FCDO Desk Officer has just returned after being seconded to support Ukraine.
- ii. **Communal Bins:** Councillor John raised concern over the stability of the communal bins informing that the wind causes the bins to fall over in some areas. The Administrator confirmed that the issue would be reported to the relevant colleagues. The Administrator also gave an update on waste management explaining that the AIG Operations and Facilities Director had been in discussion with a Mitie consultant on joint ways of using the incinerator to better segregate materials. They have also been exploring the possibility for a combined approach for both St Helena Island and Ascension Island to ship scrap metal and renewable materials to South Africa. A note would be issued to councillors with an update.

The Administrator thanked Allen Cansick, Attorney General and the team at the Attorney-General's Chambers for their support over the past months while Ascension Island Government has been without a Crown Counsel.

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 17:30

Francesca Bennett
Clerk of Council

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


Sean Burns
On behalf of HE Governor, Dr Philip Rushbrook