



Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council

16:30 on Thursday 17 August 2023 at the Courthouse

MINUTES

Present: HE Gregory Gibson, Acting Governor [remotely] Councillor Kerry Benjamin
HH Simon Minshull, Administrator Councillor Kyla Benjamin
Councillor Douglas Miller
Councillor Alan Nicholls
Councillor Laura Shearer

In attendance: Madeleine Roper, FCDO Deputy Team Lead, Falklands & Ascension
[remotely]
Carl Mackerras, Head of the Administrator's Office
Siobhan Stewart, Clerk of Council

Apologies: David Ballantyne, Acting Attorney General
Catherine Leo, Acting Director of Resources
Matthew James, Crown Counsel

1. Welcome

HH the Administrator welcomed all parties present and those attending remotely.

2. Approval of Minutes

Decision: The summary of the Informal Council meeting held on 22 June 2023 and published on 12 July 2023 was accepted and in accordance with the Council Rules these were agreed by Council members.

Decision: The minutes of the Formal Council meeting held on 06 July 2023 and published on 25 July 2023 was accepted and in accordance with the Council Rules these were agreed by Council members.

3. Matters arising

There were currently no actions on the actions tracker.

4. Joint Ministerial Council

The Administrator explained that the annual Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council (JMC) is due to take place on 14-15 November 2023. The Administrator requested that elected members consider who they wish to nominate to attend the JMC in November on behalf of the Ascension Island Council. Councillor Nicholls explained that he will not be available to attend the JMC this year due to the close proximity to Armistice Day and given that there is uncertainty on whether or not there will be a locum priest on the island during this time. Councillors nominated Councillor Kyla Benjamin and Councillor Laura Shearer to attend the JMC in November 2023.

5. UKOTA Representation

The Head of the Administrator's Office (HoAO) explained that the UKOTA Constitution states that Each Member shall be represented in the Association by one natural person duly appointed by them and empowered to act on their behalf, referred to as the Appointed Representative. The Appointed Representative will be required to share

information from UKOTA with fellow elected members and seek/provide a co-ordinated response where required, as well as attending regular virtual meetings. The HoAO invited Councillors to formally nominate one elected member to be the Appointed Representative of Ascension Island. Councillors nominated Councillor Alan Nicholls to be the Appointed Representative of Ascension Island.

6. Green Mountain Archway

Councillor Nicholls reported of a matter brought before the Ascension Island Council Public Works Committee by the Facilities Manager in relation to the Green Mountain archway leading into the walled garden and Garden Cottage. Councillor Nicholls explained that the archway has recently been deconstructed to prevent any unplanned collapse and is now scheduled for restoration with funding readily available for repairs. Councillor Nicholls explained that the Public Works Committee were invited to consider the recommendation that the width of the opening be increased by a further 1.5 meters, instead of rebuilding the archway. Benefits such as emergency vehicle access and large maintenance vehicles access was highlighted, especially given the scheduled renovation of Garden Cottage. Councillor Nicholls confirmed that both the Heritage Society and Conservation and Fisheries Directorate were consulted, with both confirming their contentment of the proposal. It was also suggested that a bespoke iron gate be put in situ, with public engagement to take place in relation to the design of the gate. Councillor Nicholls reported of a substantial cost saving by not rebuilding the arch, recommending that funds could then be spent on the repointing of the surrounding wall instead. Councillor Nicholls confirmed that the Public Works Committee has considered the matter fully and recommends that the island Council fully endorse the proposal to widen the archway instead of rebuilding it.

Councillor Shearer requested clarity as to whether formal written recommendation had been sought from the Ascension Island Heritage Society or the Conservation and Fisheries Directorate. Councillor Nicholls explained that he has not seen anything in writing, however reassurance has been given that consultation has taken place and approval was given. Councillor Shearer suggested that given the high heritage interest in the structures on Green Mountain that a formal consultation takes place, with formal letters of recommendation submitted from both the Heritage Society and the Conservation and Fisheries Directorate. Councillor Shearer pointed out the legal requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment to be completed given that the structure is within a National Park and also recommended that the proposal is taken forward for Public Consultation to allow the wider community of Ascension to raise any points. Discussion was had regarding the propose design, Councillor Nicholls agreed to request further information from AIG. Councillor Nicholls explained that the gates would be locked to prevent any unauthorised access however people who have booked Garden Cottage will be granted access to drive to the cottage.

The Administrator noted that he is the President of the Ascension Island Heritage Society and therefore declared a conflict of interest on the matter.

The Administrator identified the following actions for AIG;

1. Formally consult the Ascension Island Heritage Society.
2. Formally explore the legal requirements for development within a National Park, including any need for an Environmental Impact Assessment.
3. Consider access plans fully, including the control of keys.
4. Provide a detailed design drawing of the proposed works.
5. Hold a period of public consultation to seek the wider communities' views on the proposal.

The Administrator thanked Councillors for their input and recommendations and confirmed that an update would be provided to Council at a later date.

7. Any other business

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

- i. **FCDO/MOD Officials Visit:** Councillors Kerry Benjamin requested an update as to when the FCDO/MOD

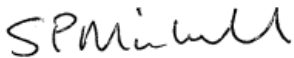
Officials visit is now expected to happen following the recent cancellation. The Administrator explained that the visit was due to take place in July and then August, but the Airbridge flights were unfortunately cancelled on three separate occasions. The Administrator confirmed that efforts are being made for a rescheduled visit to take place in November 2023, slightly later than hoped due to overseas leave. The HoAO explained that discussions remain ongoing in the meantime.

- ii. **Distribution of Public Notices:** Councillor Nicholls requested that AIG consider no longer sending non AIG Public Notices via email distribution and instead encourage uptake in the use of the Islander Newspaper, especially by the clubs. Councillor Nicholls noted that the AIG should not be in competition with the only newspaper on island, which are struggling due to the lack of adverts. The Administrator agreed to look into the issue and provide an update to Council. Councillor Shearer suggested that the Islander consider making a bid to Ascension Island Charities Fund.

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 16:55

Siobhan Stewart
Clerk of Council

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



Simon Minshall

On behalf of HE the Acting Governor, Mr Gregory Gibson