



**Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council**  
**16:30 on Thursday 28 September 2023 at the Courthouse**

**MINUTES**

Present: HE Nigel Phillips CBE, Governor [remotely] Councillor Kerry Benjamin  
HH Carl Mackerras, Acting Administrator Councillor Kyla Benjamin  
David Ballantyne, Attorney General Councillor Douglas Miller  
Catherine Leo, Acting Director of Resources Councillor Alan Nicholls  
Councillor Laura Shearer

In attendance: Matthew James, Crown Counsel  
Madeleine Roper, FCDO Deputy Team Lead, Falklands & Ascension  
[remotely]  
Siobhan Stewart, Clerk of Council

Apologies:

**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 03 August 2023 and published on 16 August 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 17 August 2023 and published on 29 August 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. Pre-Joint Ministerial Council**

Councillor Shearer reported that she recently represented Ascension Island at the pre-Joint Ministerial Council (pre-JMC) meetings held in Gibraltar in September 2023. During these meetings, representatives of all UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) were present and engaged in discussing their respective strengths and weaknesses, sharing invaluable insights with each other, especially around the impact of Brexit on both Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands, as well as the importance of established, reliable shipping routes for Ascension Island. Gibraltar Government suggested a UKOT youth games event, however due to practical, logistical and financial challenges this is something Ascension is unlikely to be able to participate in. Noteworthy meetings included a session with the Bank of Gibraltar, focusing on potential access to banking services for all UKOT's, as well as a visit to the University of Gibraltar, gaining insight into the various courses it offers; both of which could be of particular benefit to Ascension Island constituents.

HE the Governor thanked Councillor Shearer for attending this pre-JMC as it will help prepare Councillors for their visit to London in November 2023 to attend the formal JMC. HE the Governor noted the importance of the forthcoming JMC where it is expected that a political declaration will be agreed as part of the larger piece of work

being completed to understand the evolving relationship between the UK and Overseas Territories so that a strategy may be formed to give life to the declaration.

## 5. Disapplication of the Animal (Diseases) (St Helena) Ordinance, 1944

Crown Counsel explained that prior to the implementation of the Biosecurity Ordinance, 2020, the Animal (Diseases) Ordinance, 1944 applied to Ascension by virtue of the St Helena Laws (Application to Ascension) Ordinance, 1988. Crown Counsel explained that there is now ample provision from specifications under the Biosecurity Act, 2020 to mean that the provisions of the Animal (Diseases) Ordinance, 1944, and the Animal (Diseases) Regulations 1950 are no longer necessary. However, as they are still in force it requires multiple people to perform the same checks, and for those importing animals (such as dogs) to file several sets of documentation giving the same information. Crown Counsel noted that this will not only simplify the process for applicants, but will also reduce the operating costs for AIG employees in reviewing additional unnecessary documentation.

	Proposal	Kerry B	DM	AN	LS	Kyla B
1	To formally recommend that Animal (Diseases) Ordinance, 1944 is disapplied to Ascension.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Crown Council invited Councillors to note the contents of the Order, and recommend to HE the Governor that the Animal (Diseases) Ordinance, 1944 is disapplied to Ascension. The Administrator explained that all five Councillors present have voted in favour of the above, HE the Governor thanked Councillors for their advice and accepted their recommendation.

## 6. Supplementary Appropriation

The ADoR explained that three supplementary bids are being brought before the Island Council, following recommendation of approval from the Finance Committee on 02 August 2023. Two requests were for replacement vehicles for the Plumbers and the Mason, and the final one to upgrade the pumphouse at Two Boats swimming pool.

The ADoR explained that the vehicle currently allocated to the plumbers can no longer be used due to severe corrosion and needs to be replaced with a more suitable four-wheel drive vehicle with tool/material storage. The Masons vehicle was reported to have similar issues, with the vehicle being so old that parts were now becoming obsolete. It was recommended that the Masons vehicle be replaced with a vehicle that is more suited to the trade and transportation of plant equipment and heavy materials, such as an IVECO Daily Tipper.

The ADoR provided an overview of the current pumphouse at the Two Boats swimming pool, highlighting the age of the existing pumps and their resulting failings. It was recommended that more contemporary, energy efficient pumps be purchased to replace the existing ailing ones. The importance of Two Boats Pool to the community was noted, with the ADoR offering reassurance that every effort would be made to avoid any closure periods during the changeover.

	Proposal	Kerry B	DM	AN	LS	Kyla B
1	£90K for Capital expenditure to the Development Fund for 2023/2024	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The ADoR invited Councillors to recommend the draft Supplementary Appropriation Ordinance to HE the Governor as an addition to the 2023/2024 budget pack. The Administrator explained that all five Councillors present have voted in favour of the above. HE the Governor thanked Councillors for their advice and accepted their recommendation, having first sought assurance from ADoR that the procurement process would ensure value for money.

## 7. Any other business

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

- i. **Fresh produce provisions to AIG employees:** Councillor Nicholls reported concerns raised by a constituent in relation to the fresh produce provision for AIG employees. Clarity was sought on where the funds came from to fund this, with the suggestion that the money may be better spent subsidising the Chandlery to allow for a price cap to be put in place, for fruit and vegetables, for all people living on Ascension. Further clarity was requested regarding taxation and food wastage. The Administrator explained that the Chandlery is a private business and it would not be appropriate in this instance to provide a subsidy. The ADoR explained that following Councillors approval of the budget in March 2023, which included the staff welfare initiative of providing fresh produce to AIG employees, with each AIG employee and dependant being provided a small supply of fresh produce, in line with all other employing organisations on island. The ADoR explained that all streams of revenue contribute to the overall running of the Government, with no specific labelling on what revenue is spent on what expense. Additionally, the ADoR noted that not all revenue is tax related and that food wastage has been minimal, with the benefits to staff welfare being the key priority.
- ii. **BFBS Service:** Councillor Nicholls passed on his gratitude on behalf of constituents to those responsible for restoring BFBS TV service to the island. The Administrator explained that a group of volunteers from Encompass were responsible for its restoration, with a long-term solution being looked into with BFBS. Councillor Shearer relayed her thanks to those who have voluntarily repaired the BFBS service and for the continued Public Notices keeping constituents informed.
- iii. **Transit Passengers:** Councillor Nicholls requested an update on the use of the airbridge for transiting to and from St Helena to and from the Falklands Islands. The Administrator reported that meetings are currently taking place in London where arrangements are expected to be finalised soon.
- iv. **MUGA Facilities:** Councillor Shearer requested that the Mexican Thorn bushes in close proximity to the MUGA be removed to avoid lost footballs and lost time. Councillor Shearer also suggested that consideration be given to increased lighting in the immediate area.
- v. **USAF Base Employees:** Councillor Shearer thanked Councillor Nicholls for raising a Councillor Enquiry Form in relation to employee concern regarding the transition from WCFS to YEI, Councillor Shearer noted the helpful contact details for the Public Solicitors Office now available on the AIG website should anyone feel that their contractual rights have been breached.

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.*



Carl Mackerras

*On behalf of HE the Governor, Mr Nigel Phillips CBE*