



**Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council**  
**16:30 on Thursday 01 February 2024 at the Courthouse**

**MINUTES**

Present: HE Nigel Phillips, Governor [remotely] Councillor Kerry Benjamin  
HH Simon Minshull, Administrator Councillor Kyla Benjamin  
David Ballantyne, Attorney General [remotely] Councillor Douglas Miller  
Peter Thomas, Director of Resources Councillor Alan Nicholls

In attendance: Matthew James, Crown Counsel  
Carl Mackerras, Head of the Administrator's Office  
Ailsa Hearne, FCDO Desk Officer  
Siobhan Stewart, Clerk of Council

Apologies: Councillor Laura Shearer

**1. Welcome**

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

**2. Approval of Minutes**

**Decision:** The minutes of the formal Council meeting held on 28 November 2023 and published on 14 December 2023 was accepted and in accordance with the Council Rules these were agreed by Council members.

**Decision:** The minutes of the formal Council Public Works Committee meeting held on 05 December 2023 and published on 03 January 2024 was accepted and in accordance with the Council Rules these were agreed by Council members.

**Decision:** The summary of the informal Council meeting held on 07 December 2023 and published on 05 January 2024 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 13 December 2023 and published on 05 January 2024 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. Telecommunications**

The Administrator invited Councillors to comment on the telecommunications memo and [the response to the Councillor Enquiry Form submitted by Councillor Kyla Benjamin on 25 January 2024](#), provided to Councillors prior to the meeting. Councillor Kerry Benjamin asked for clarity on the expected timeline as to when AIG are likely to reach an agreement with Sure. The Administrator explained that after months of negotiations with Sure, an agreement is expected to be reached within the month of February 2024, which will then be shared with

Councillors. Councillor Miller expressed that many of his constituents have asked the same question, and they will be pleased to hear that agreement is expected soon.

Councillor Nicholls requested clarity as to when the new Ordinance and regulatory regime can be expected to be applied. Crown Counsel explained that the new legislation and policy that underpins the Ordinance remain under review, once the review is completed the policy will be provided to Council for examination; followed by the accompanying Ordinance which will then be presented to Council for formal recommendation. Councillor Nicholls asked whether the negotiations with Sure will be dependant on the introduction of the new Ordinance and regulatory regime, Crown Counsel reported that the ongoing discussions with Sure will continue to proceed independently to the implementation of the new Ordinance and regulatory regime.

HE the Governor explained that one of the challenges faced following the arrival of Starlink is the subsequent challenge that it has presented to the Sure business model. HE the Governor highlighted the need to ensure the continuity of essential services such as land-line telephone and broadband services, radio communications, the “999” service, and the mobile telephone network. It was noted that a switch to an entirely Starlink operating model would not be able to provide the necessary capabilities to deliver the aforementioned essential services. AIG continue to negotiate with Sure to find a solution that would be sustainable to allow for the option of a transitional period at a future date, whilst doing so in a managed way to ensure these essential services remain available to the community of Ascension. HE the Governor explained that the AIG are continuing to seek expert advice on how best to move forward with Sure and have been doing so in an expeditious manner, with discussions ongoing over financial figures.

The manifestation of Ascension’s current telecommunication climate is that Sure are now actively considering redundancies; given that their cost model is increasing, whilst their customer base has significantly reduced following the introduction of Starlink terminals.

HE the Governor expressed AIG commitment to continuing to keeping Councillors well informed as things progress as the Attorney General continues to lead on negotiations with Sure and AIG.

The Attorney General provided an overview of the challenges faced, noting that the expert consultants have been incredibly helpful in identifying potential operating models that will preserve essential services in Ascension and ensure continuity in the interim, with the long-term outcome still under consideration. The Attorney General confirmed that a minimum requirement of two years notice must be given by both AIG and Sure, should either wish to end services.

The Attorney General recognised the community’s wishes and asked that understanding and patience be given as his team continues to work in the community’s best interests.

Councillor Nicholls thanked HE the Governor and Attorney General for the updated and acknowledged the challenges faced by AIG during these times of negotiation. Councillor Nicholls highlighted the differing services Sure provide in St Helena in comparison to what is provided in Ascension currently, noting constituent’s free choice to choose a more reliable and faster service provider. Councillor Nicholls acknowledged the need for other essential services, such as the land-lines services, “999” service and radio communications and urged AIG to work with Sure to come to an agreement to protect these essential services to Ascension.

The Attorney General thanked Councillors for providing community feedback, and emphasised that any interim or long-term arrangements that are put in place are not guaranteed to stand the test of time. Discussion was had regarding mutual dependencies and the need for essential service to be maintained. The Attorney General reassured Council that work continues with a focus on improving services in the right way for Ascension Island as quickly as possible.

HE the Governor thanked the Attorney General and his team for their hard work and dedication to improving services in Ascension, and urged members to consider the human dynamic of this transitional period. HE the Governor highlighted the duty to safeguard essential services to ensure it can operate in a manner that is consistent with ensuring there are appropriate safety mechanisms in place, such as have a “999” system in place for the community of Ascension.

## 7. Any other business

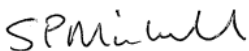
There were three items of **other business**:

- i. **Waste Management Strategy:** Councillor Nicholls reported that following a recent meeting Councillors had with Wildlife Management International regarding a feasibility study towards the potential eradication of primarily rats and mice, and possibly other pests as well. Councillor Nicholls conveyed great concern regarding the millions of rats that are reportedly currently residing at AIG's Waste Management site at the One Boat dump and was shocked to hear that Mitie, the MoD Contractor, are continuing to dump their unseparated waste there for open pit burning, ultimately creating a thriving environment for rats. Councillor Nicholls also requested that the security of the Waste Management site be reviewed to ensure the gate is closed to avoid donkeys entering the dump which is also causing pest control issues. Councillor Nicholls requested an update on negotiations between AIG and Mitie regarding the use of the incinerator. The Administrator requested that Councillor Nicholls submit a Councillor Enquiry Form to allow for a full and considered response. Councillor Nicholls agreed to raise the issues at the next Public Works Committee meeting.
- ii. **Employment Ordinance:** Crown Counsel agreed to meet with Councillors soon regarding submitting proposals of changes in legislation to Council for consideration.
- iii. **Offshore Fisheries Legislation:** Crown Counsel apologised for the delay in bringing the Offshore fisheries legislation to Council formally. It is hoped that the required documents will have completed the final checks process and will be ready for the next formal meeting on 21 March 2024.
- iv. **HRH The Duke of Edinburgh:** The Administrator thanked Councillors for their attendance at the reception held for HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, who made a short visit to Ascension following his visit to St Helena. HE the Governor conveyed his honour to be able to host HRH The Duke of Edinburgh during his visit to St Helena, which was a huge success. HE the Governor made particular note of being able to include all elements of the territory with a short visit to Ascension and a video call with James Glass, the Acting Administrator and Chief Islander of Tristan da Cunha. The Attorney General also reported of a successful visit.
- v. **Councillor Miller:** HE the Governor and the Administrator thanked Councillor Miller for his contributions to Council during his tenure as an Island Councillor and wished him every success in the future.

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 17:00

Siobhan Stewart  
Clerk of Council

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



*Simon Minshull*

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