



Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council

16:30 on Thursday 27 March 2025 at the Courthouse

MINUTES

Present: HE Nigel Phillips, Governor [remotely] Councillor Kyla Benjamin
HH Martin Hogg, Acting Administrator Councillor Alan Nicholls
Andrew Dawson, Acting Attorney General [remotely] Councillor Laura Shearer
Peter Thomas, Director of Resources

In attendance: Chrystele Todd, FCDO Desk Officer [remotely]
Georgina Wilson, Clerk of Council

Apologies: Daniel Weight, Acting Crown Counsel
Councillor Gordon Worthington
HH the Administrator, Simon Minshull

1. Welcome

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

2. Approval of Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Formal Council meeting held on 16 January 2025 and published on 11 February 2025 were accepted and, in accordance with the Council Rules, were agreed by Council members.

Decision: The summary of the Informal Council meeting held on 06 February 2025 and published on 07 March 2025 was accepted and, in accordance with the Council Rules, was agreed by Council members.

3. Matters arising

Matters arising were addressed via the action's tracker. There were two topics on the tracker which were discussed as follows:

Pets on the MOD FIRS: This item was resolved at the last council meeting, and it was highlighted that there was no further update to report on this. It was agreed that this could be removed from the Actions Tracker.

Future vet visit plans: AIG are working with the Falklands Islands Senior Veterinary Officer to confirm details for the future vet visit, which is now proposed for early May 2025.

4. 2025/2026 Operational and Capital Budget Appropriation

The Director of Resources (DoR) reported that the Finance Committee has met both informally and formally to scrutinise the business cases and papers which detail the Government's proposed Revenue and Expenditure estimates for the financial year 2025/2026. Following scrutiny on 20 March 2025, the Finance Committee recommended to the Island Council an appropriation of funds, as follows.

- From the Consolidated Fund a sum of £8.391M for operational expenditure.
- From the Development Fund a sum of £240.4K for capital projects expenditure.

The DoR advised Council that the Attorney General has reviewed the draft Appropriation Ordinance, and minor updates were made following the advice provided.

The DoR expressed his thanks to colleagues within the Resources Directorate for producing the budget, officers throughout AIG for their support, and Councillors for their scrutiny, diligence, and contributions made throughout the whole budget setting process. Prior to taking the vote the DoR opened the floor to Councillors to make comment and ask questions. There were no questions or comments from Councillors.

The DoR asked each Councillor in turn if they were happy to take the proposal for an appropriation of £8.391M for operational expenditure to the Consolidated Fund for the 2025/26 financial year, as well as an appropriation of £240.4K for capital projects expenditure to the Development Fund for the 2025/26 financial year forward as a recommendation to the Governor?

	Proposal	Cllr Kyla Benjamin	Cllr Alan Nicholls	Cllr Laura Shearer
1	For an appropriation of £8.391M for operational expenditure to the Consolidated Fund for the 2025/26 financial year to be taken forward as a recommendation to the Governor and;	Yes	Yes	Yes
	For an appropriation of £240.4K for capital projects expenditure to the Development Fund for the 2025/26 financial year to be taken forward as a recommendation to the Governor	Yes	Yes	Yes

HE the Governor thanked the DoR and the Finance team for their hard work on delivering this year’s budget and thanked Councillors for their recommendation, whilst conveying particular thanks to the Finance Committee members for their diligence and necessary oversight over the last few months.

HE the Governor acknowledged Councillors’ recommendation and accepted, thanking Councillors for their advice.

5. Business Levy

The DoR explained that following discussion and consideration the Finance Committee recommended to the Island Council that the Business Levy be maintained at its current level of £1.6M for the next financial year.

The DoR explained that at a meeting of the Finance Committee held on 20 March 2025 Councillors were advised that AIG had not carried out consultation with island stakeholders regarding an increase in the Business Levy for the 2025/26 financial year. Therefore, Councillors on the Committee felt they were unable to recommend to Council an increase in the Business Levy for the 2025/26 financial year. Councillors requested that a detailed plan of processes and timetabling of communication is put in place for the consideration of setting the Business Levy in future financial years.

The DoR advised Council that the Attorney General’s Chambers has reviewed the draft Business Levy Ordinance 2020, and minor updates were made following the advice provided. Prior to taking a vote the DoR opened the floor to Councillors to make comment and ask questions.

Councillor Nicholls expressed agreement that raising the Business Levy without appropriate consultation was not practical. He explained that the new Council considering the next financial year, must be given adequate time to review.

The DoR acknowledged Councillor Nicholls’ response and agreed that an induction for new Council members is an important point for Medium Term Financial Planning.

The DoR asked each Councillor in turn if they were happy to take the proposal to retain the current level of Business Levy as a recommendation to the Governor.

	Proposal	Cllr Kerry Benjamin	Cllr Alan Nicholls	Cllr Laura Shearer
2	The proposal of retaining the current level of Business Levy to be taken forward as a recommendation to the Governor	Yes	Yes	Yes

HE the Governor acknowledged Councillors' recommendation and accepted, thanking Councillors for their advice.

6. Any other business

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

- i. **Sick Leave Policy:** Councillor Nicholls explained that the Sick Leave Policy had been again raised by Councillor Shearer at a previous meeting, and a Councillor Enquiry Form had been submitted, but no response had been provided. Councillor Nicholls has since been approached by concerned constituents regarding the policy, but was unable to provide an update. Councillor Nicholls expressed that the implementation of the policy is a matter of urgency. Councillor Nicholls asked what was being done in regards to the appropriate legislation to bring this onto the statutory books. The Acting Administrator explained that he had received the Councillor Enquiry Form from Councillor Shearer and was following this up. He was unable to provide an update in this meeting, but would do so as soon as possible.

Councillor Nicholls directed the question regarding Sick Leave Policy at the Acting Attorney General (AAG). Due to a poor internet connection, the AAG was unable to hear the question clearly but highlighted the need for a more coherent working relationship between all stakeholders. The AAG suggested an additional virtual meeting for the following week to discuss what the Saint Helena AG Chambers can offer to ensure that expectations and requirements can be met and that all concerns raised about the Sick Leave Policy can be discussed in detail.

HE the Governor highlighted that the line was very poor and that it was very hard to hear. He added that progress has been made regarding the Sick Leave Policy, but agreed that a meeting the following week between Council and the AAG would be recommended. The Acting Administrator agreed to arrange a meeting as soon as possible.

7. Proposed dates of next meetings:

Informal Council meeting – 10:00 on 03 April 2025

Formal Council meeting – 16:30 on 10 April 2025

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 16:50

Georgina Wilson
Clerk of Council

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



Martin Hogg

On behalf of HE the Governor, Mr Nigel Phillips