



**Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council
16:30 on Thursday 04 December 2025 at the Courthouse**

MINUTES

| | | | |
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| Present: | HE Tasha Harris, Acting Governor HH Rowan Laxton, Administrator Andrew Duncan, Attorney General Peter Thomas, Director of Resources | [remotely] | Councillor Ethan Bally Councillor Eugene Bennett Councillor Michael Ellick Councillor Thomas Hickling |
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In attendance: James Twigg, Crown Counsel
Martin Hogg, Head of Administrator's Office
Dr Tiffany Simpson, Director of Conservation and Fisheries
Stephanie Sherrin, Policy and Comms Officer
Georgina Wilson, Clerk of Council

Apologies: Councillor Thomas Barnes
Councillor Laura Shearer
Councillor Alan Nicholls
Chrystele Todd, FCDO Desk Officer

1. Welcome

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

2. Approval of Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the informal Council meeting held on 20 November 2025 and published 01 December 2025 were accepted, and in accordance with the Council Rules were agreed by Council members.

3. Matters Arising

- **Food security:** The Administrator updated councillors on hydroponics operations. The Administrator advised that over the last two years, the costs of running the facility had increased from £74k to £83k and sales had also increased from £17k to £19k. It was noted that there is potential to make savings in the running costs by utilising solar electricity and waste water, and a change in the type of covering used on shade houses could increase yields for the facility. The Administrator further advised that AIG are working on a plan for hydroponics and will bring to council to review in the first quarter of 2026. The Administrator thanked councillors for their patience.

4. Environmental or Non-environmental Activity Permitting Policy

Stephanie Sherrin, AIG's Policy and Comms Officer, revisited the Memo. A recent operational case under the current research and filming permitting process highlighted an inefficiency: an activity with no environmental impact was referred to the Conservation and Fisheries Directorate for review, creating further demand on the Directorate's workload without affecting the Administrator's Office's approval decision. In response, AIG has

reviewed the existing research and filming permitting policies. The proposed process now categorises activities by their potential environmental impact up-front. Activities determined to have no to low environmental effect would be reviewed directly by the Administrator's Office, streamlining approvals. A permit fee has also been introduced to align with fees for similar activities in other UK Overseas Territories, including Saint Helena. This fee will be set at £250, but this can be waived depending on circumstances.

Stephanie thanked councillors for their feedback and questions provided at the previous informal meeting regarding the policy changes and explained that they had taken on councillors' feedback and consulted with stakeholders. Definitions have been added to the policy and further research into filming and photography permits has been undertaken to add more information to help clarify the different types of activities. It was noted that permits issued in 2025 could have raised up to £7,500 in potential revenue for AIG had a fee been in place.

The Administrator thanked Stephanie Sherrin and Dr Tiffany Simpson for their work on this policy, and asked councillors if they had any questions or comments. Councillors were content with the changes to the policy and no questions or comments were made.

Each councillor was asked in turn if they were happy to recommend to the Acting Governor that the proposed Environmental or Non-environmental Activity Permitting Policy be approved.

| | Proposal | Cllr Bally | Cllr Bennet | Cllr Ellick | Cllr Hickling |
|---|---|------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1 | Recommend that the proposed Environmental or Non-environmental Activity Permitting Policy be approved? | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

HE the Acting Governor thanked all involved in producing the policy and the successful consultation period. HE the Acting Governor acknowledged councillors' recommendation and accepted, thanking councillors for their advice.

5. **AOB:** There were one item of AOB raised.

- i. **Financial deficit:** Councillor Ellick requested an update from AIG regarding the financial deficit and asked if it could be added to the Action Tracker. Peter Thomas, Director of Resources, explained that an update will be provided at the next extraordinary informal meeting on 17 December.

6. **Proposed dates of next meetings:**

Extraordinary Informal Council meeting – 16:00 Wednesday 17 December 2025

Informal Council meeting – 15:00 Thursday 15 January 2026

Formal Council meeting – 16:30 Thursday 29 January 2026

It was noted that this will be Peter Thomas, Director of Resources, last formal council meeting. The Administrator thanked Peter Thomas for his dedication to AIG over the last two years, and noted that Peter had left a legacy for which AIG is immensely grateful, and wished Peter all the best. The Acting Governor Harris echoed the Administrator's best wishes and thanks on behalf of Saint Helena Government and Governor Phillips and wished the departing Director of Resources farewell.

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 16:53

Georgina Wilson
Clerk of Council

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



Rowan Laxton

On behalf of HE the Governor, Mrs Tasha Harris