

**ASCENSION ISLAND
GOVERNMENT**

Clerk of Council's Office
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Informal meeting Summary of the Ascension Island Council

15:00 on Thursday 02 April 2026 at the Courthouse

MEETING SUMMARY

Present: HH Rowan Laxton, Administrator
Acting Director of Resources (DoR), Catherine Jones
Crown Counsel (CC), James Twigg
Councillor Ethan Bally
Councillor Thomas Barnes
Councillor Michael Ellick
Councillor Alan Nicholls

In attendance: Director of Operations and Facilities (DoOF), Nathan Millington
Deputy Chief of Police, Rachel Griffiths
Clerk to Council, Georgina Wilson
Councillor Laura Shearer

Apologies: Councillor Eugene Bennett

1. Welcome

The Administrator HH Rowan Laxton welcomed all parties and thanked everyone for attending.

2. Minutes of last Formal Meeting

The minutes of the Formal Council meeting held on 12 March 2026 are still being reviewed and finalised.

3. Matters Arising

Matters arising through the Action Tracker were discussed as Agenda Items.

4. Telecoms Update

Nathan Millington (DoOF) advised that during the free trial of Ascension Island Mobile (AIM), there were 843 services activated, not including business lines. On 1 April, the paid service was activated and at the time of the meeting, there were 150 active paid services in use, with business services taking it closer to 300. The DoOF explained that this was a slower uptake than anticipated, but hoped this would increase in the coming days as teething issues were resolved. The DoOF advised that issues with payment have slowed down the process as accounts are managed manually however this should become automated soon. Despite the glitches experienced, the DoOF believes the launch of AIM to have been successful.

Councillor Shearer raised some questions around services, including issues with downloading E-SIMS. The DoOF explained that AIM were aware of these difficulties, and were working to resolve them as quickly as possible. Councillor Shearer also raised concern around international calling. The DoOF advised that this was a roaming issue, not related to the network and relied on commercial roaming agreements being completed with international network providers. This work is ongoing by Kevin Werry (Werry Consulting) and hoped to be resolved as soon as possible. Catherine Jones (Ag DoR) advised that AIM was working with the Bank of Saint Helena to ensure direct debits could be made from their accounts. The Administrator thanked the DoOF for his update.

5. Employment Ordinance 2022 – Proposed Amendments

James Twigg, Crown Counsel (CC), advised Councillors of proposed amendments to the Employment Ordinance 2022. The proposed amendments include a minimal requirement for employing organisations to provide new employees with their contract 48 hours prior to commencing travel to Ascension Island, and that new contracts signed by the employee will require a third party to witness the signature. These changes will ensure that new staff

fully understand the terms and conditions of their employment before they arrive on Ascension, increasing transparency. Councillor Bally questioned why 48hrs was given as the time frame. CC advised that 48hrs would allow time for new employees to digest and understand the terms of the contract, while also allowing flexibility for contracts to be offered at short notice when required by an employing organisation. CC continued that sanctions could be imposed if employing organisations did not comply. Councillor Nicholls thanked CC for the proposed changes to the Employment Ordinance 2022, based on suggestions made by Councillors. Councillor Shearer requested the terminology within the Ordinance to state '30 *working days*' when referencing leave (currently 30 days). CC agreed, and also advised that all but one employing organisation had provided information on contracts and salaries for review and would be able to provide a further update on his findings at the next formal council meeting.

6. AOB

6.1 Police Discussion

The Administrator introduced the Deputy Chief of Police for Royal Saint Helena Police, Rachel Griffiths (RG). A discussion was held on plans to improve policing provision on Ascension Island, with an update of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement between the Ascension Island Government (AIG) and Royal Saint Helena Police (RSHP). RG advised plans to move towards more neighbourhood policing, highlighting the importance of integrating staff into the community to build trust. RG also advised that 'Police Specials' would be reintroduced to provide further support to the Ascension policing team and allow for wider police presence to deter alcohol related offences. Councillors raised questions over recruitment and staff retention, confidentiality concerns, minimum staffing for effective policing and concerns over new or non RSHP officers understanding Ascension's local laws. Councillors also requested that police avoid attending constituents' place of work to avoid speculation and cause for concern, recommending that individuals should be invited to attend the police station outside of working hours. RG thanked Councillors for the issues raised and appreciated their suggestions. The Administrator thanked the Deputy Chief.

6.2 74th Westminster Seminar on Effective Parliaments

Councillor Bally and Councillor Ellick expressed their gratitude to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for the opportunity to represent Ascension at the 74th Westminster Seminar on Effective Parliaments from 9-13 March 2026. Councillors felt the seminar was an excellent opportunity to promote Ascension to the wider Commonwealth community and to understand how Ascension and the other UK Overseas Territories can work together collectively.

6.3 Public Bus

Councillor Ellick raised some questions around the public bus service provided over weekend periods. Councillor Ellick queried how the fares were accounted for to ensure transparency. The Ag Director of Resources advised that there is a system built on trust between AIG and the dedicated drivers who provide this service. The Ag Director advised Councillors that the AIG is open to suggestions to improve the service, but feels the system currently works well. Councillor Ellick suggested that Dash Cams could be introduced to provide security to both the driver and passengers. The Ag Director thanked the Councillor for his suggestion.

Next Formal Meeting 23 April 2026

The Administrator thanked all for attending and the meeting closed at 16:18

Georgina Wilson
Clerk to Council