

COUNCIL REPORT – 31 MAY 2016

The Ascension Island Council met on 31 May for the first time under Lisa Phillips as Governor. Councillors Leo, John, Yon & Ellick joined on Ascension and Councillor George joined from St Helena.

Governor Phillips said she looked forward to working with the Ascension Island Council and expressed her interest in Ascension matters – she would be answering questions on Ascension during a radio phone in on Friday.

In the first agenda item, the Governor updated Council on the progress to ensure **continued access to St Helena**. She understood peoples' need to plan. An announcement on the favoured access option would be made soon. She emphasized that a link between the islands would be maintained.

The Council then considered the 5 legislative items on the agenda. Councillors recommended to the Governor unanimously in each case that all 5 items should be adopted.

The first legislative item dealt with the regulation of **drones** and an order prohibiting the flying of drones in an area around the airfield. Under existing legislation hobbyist drones under 7kg can be flown anywhere on Ascension outside the prohibition zone. Special rules apply for commercial drones, those with cameras and those over 7kg. Information for the public would be put up on the AIG website.

The second legislative item updated Ascension's **marriage ordinance**. It would shortly be possible to apply to the Administrator to get married in a location other than the church, the AIG building or the Residency. It was also clarified that same sex marriages were permitted.

The third item, the **jurisdiction ordinance**, implemented a recommendation of the Wass report that orders and sentences made in St Helena and Tristan could be enforced on Ascension. Now that St Helena has adopted similar legislation, this means for example, that a drink drive ban issued on Ascension would also be enforced on St Helena.

The fourth legislative item made it an **offence to hold a mobile phone whilst driving**. Hands-free phone would still be allowed and exemptions were permitted for the emergency services.

The fifth item confirmed that the **offshore fisheries legislation** approved last November had come into force.

The Council then considered 3 items of non-legislative business.

Governor Phillips spoke enthusiastically in favour of extending the **UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**. Councillors agreed that Ascension should request the extension, subject to sufficient resources being available.

Councillors then considered the **time-table for the election of a new Council**. Council advised the Governor that their preferred date for dissolution would be 2 August, with nominations due by 16 August and an election on 1 September. This

would allow a new Council to be in place in good time before the Joint Ministerial Council in London at the end of October.

In the final item, Councillor Leo introduced a paper on the **future of Ascension**, where he proposed that Council write to the Councils on St Helena and Tristan to seek their support for self-determination for the people of Ascension. The Solicitor General explained that AIG could not be bound by this but Councillors could write in their own capacity. The Governor set out the work FCO had commissioned on evaluating the condition of Ascension's pier and infrastructure. Councillor Leo requested that the FCO provide more information about the work it was undertaking on the future of Ascension before he decided how to proceed with his letter.

Under **any other business** the Council asked about the entry control situation of one local resident. The Governor confirmed she was still considering the case. The Administrator said that following public concern about police enforcement of the drink drive law, the police would be publishing a policing plan and holding a public meeting to set out their approach.

The final meeting of this Council would be held in late June/ early July.

Marc Holland, Administrator, 1 June 2016