

MINUTES OF THE ASCENSION ISLAND COUNCIL (AIC)

MEETING HELD IN THE COURT HOUSE,

Friday, 21st October 2016 at 09:00hrs

Present: (by telephone) HE Governor Lisa Phillips (LP)
HH Administrator Marc Holland (MH)
Walter Scott, Solicitor General (WS)
Jamie Manson, Director of Resources (JM)
Councillor Samantha Arms-Lawrence (SAL)
Councillor Marie-Anne Dennis (MD)
Councillor Jacqui Ellick (JE)
Councillor Kitty George (KG)
Councillor Nicholas John (NJ)

In attendance: Tracy Foreman, Clerk of Council (Temp)

1. Introductory remarks

All Councillors were present and the meeting commenced at 09:05. The Administrator thanked the Governor, Lisa Phillips, for dialling in, all Councillors and those present for attending.

2. Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the Formal Island Council Meeting, 02/09/16, and the Informal Island Council Meeting, 30/09/16, were discussed and adopted as a true record.

3. Matters arising / actions

MH asked if there were any actions to follow-up: The Governor talked about the actions and it was noted that Rob Parfrey would be following up on the Child Safeguarding Standards.

No further actions were noted as outstanding.

4. Council committees

A discussion was held around who volunteered on the Council Committees, and the following have been voted in:

- Finance Committee:
 - Nicholas John
 - Samantha Arms-Lawrence
 - Marie-Anne Dennis
 - Jamie Manson (Chair)
- Biodiversity & Fisheries Committee:

- Nicholas John
- Jacqui Ellick
- Kitty George (Chair)
- Dr Judith Brown will also be a member of this committee
- Safeguarding Champion
 - JE to continue as Safeguarding Champion

MH thanked all for volunteering. The next few years promised to be busy ones. WS would send the official paperwork requesting approval from the Governor for the Committees, to formalise it for the records.

5. Employment Legislation

WS presented the first draft of the Employment Legislation to the Council for consideration. The proposed paper was discussed at length, WS wanted to outline that this is only the first draft; there will be a six month bridging period before the paper becomes law; WS will get comprehensive document and consultation paper to employers and employees by 1 November 2016. WS asked all present to consider what was in the proposed paper and to highlight any areas they felt might be missing.

Two main topics were discussed regarding the proposed legislation, these were:

- Councillors discussed the minimum age for contracted employees, as it raised concerns if under 18's committed an offence. WS reassured all present that if any under 18's committed an offence, they would still be tried as a minor and their rights were not affected. The debate around minimum age is still open and will be worked through during the consultation process.
- Councillors reported that quite a few people on the island felt that wages were low and an in-depth discussion was held regarding this. The Councillors felt that the whole package offered to employees does need to be taken into account, such as accommodation and benefits. WS asked councillors to bear in mind that minimum wage has been introduced in other countries to ensure that employees are not being taken advantage of and to address where there might be a social need. MH felt that there was enough local interest in enforcing a minimum wage and WS will include this in the proposed paper so that a more informed discussion can be held regarding this. The Governor did say that AIG would only intervene if any employees' needs were not being met, but at this time they were not looking to impose a minimum wage in Ascension. MH asked all Councillors to discuss this with employees so that a balanced view could be represented and that open and honest two-way communication occurs. WS also stated that gratuities were in the proposed paper; this was to open the discussion as imposing certain criteria might affect wages. JE asked if AIG gratuity model could be used by other employers on the island. WS also stated that the new ordinance will set the minimum standard, if employers wanted to provide more this can't be stopped. WS asked Councillors to present all cases with a balanced view and if there were any specific concerns to see him separately, in order for correct procedures to be followed.

The Governor wanted the paper to be fair and not too aggressive as in other places very strict guidelines have resulted in employees being unable to access certain benefits. She also asked

if the Council would consider flexible working hours; WS will look to include this in the paper.

6. Extension of Court Jurisdiction Ordinance

AIG needed to ensure that the Policy aligned with Saint Helena, revising what has already been approved. All Councillors approved the new Ordinance and WS will include it as being approved.

7. Amendment to electoral ballot paper

A number of people raised concerns around why individual voters could be identified from the ballot paper. The new Ordinance was recommended to address this concern; all Councillors were in favour of the proposal and it was approved. WS will send the amended forms to the Governor for her final approval.

8. Fire engine capital bid

The current Land Rover Fire Engine that is in service is now beyond repair. A like-for-like replacement would be too expensive to purchase. A suitable alternative has been sourced and the company have held their initial quote. All councillors voted in favour of the new vehicle, JM will proceed with the order and the vehicle should be delivered in six months.

9. Fuel

The quality of the fuel being supplied to the Island is below modern standards for use by motor vehicles. The Administrator requested that a meeting be held by all stakeholders to work out a way forward. He also stated that clean and appropriate fuel storage for vehicle use is currently unavailable. All Councillors were asked to speak to the public so that feed-back can be received. NJ stated that the sulphur issue is complex, however it is affecting a number of people. The Administrator has requested the fuel specifications from Solomon's, however there is no fuel specialist on the island.

There are a number of different uses for diesel fuel on the island. Babcock need low-grade diesel fuel for their generators; while the public need a higher grade for use in vehicles. While the infrastructure does not comply with current needs, neither AIG nor MOD are able to provide the public with clean diesel. WS raised the issue that the Government can't afford to wait for a long-term solution as they have a responsibility to best care for expensive infrastructure.

MH stated that any new legislation enforced by AIG may result in the public paying extra, this could be in the form of a fuel surcharge, as they are doing in Saint Helena.

From the round-table meeting, a statement should be prepared informing all vehicle owners that their vehicle may be at risk from the high sulphur content of the fuel.

10. Airport update

The Governor told all present that Saint Helena are currently collecting weather data and that this information will be relayed to the public. Atlantic Star were due to carry out a test flight,

which would have been the largest plane landed in Saint Helena. MH stated that Atlantic Star were one of the organisations hoping to bid in a new tender process. The Governor also stated that whichever company won this contract; Ascension Island would form part of the link and will be included in the tender.

There is currently no solution to the airport issue, however Saint Helena Government is working hard to ensure that a solution is reached in a timely manner.

11. JMC

The Administrator tabled the JMC Communiqué and the timetable around their visit. MH said that Ascension was mentioned several times within the document and he would like all Councillors to be aware of this and agree what is the extent of our involvement. Specific comments include:

- Councillors needed to check with Rob Parfrey, what was a realistic target that Ascension could commit to with regards to Safeguarding.
- Amendments were needed in paragraph 10 and 11.
- MH suggested Councillors agree what they were going to discuss at JMC in advance and identify which Ministers or officials could help them.
- The Governor said that her Councillors found the JMC a useful forum to hear about issues experienced on Islands within the Commonwealth, she was confident that our Councillors would experience the same.

12. Review of Code of Conduct

No paper was submitted for this item. However WS stated that the current Code of Conduct appeared to be a basic MOU and did not hold the legal authority that was required. The new paper should have clear guidelines on how Councillors should behave and steps to follow if any form of misconduct was found. WS wanted to raise two questions:

- Does the current Code of Conduct still serve its purpose; and
- Could it be improved to better represent the correct legal framework?

The Governor requested that Ascension's new Code of Conduct needs to mirror Saint Helena's as theirs is based on one provided by the Commonwealth.

Action: WS will table a paper before the next Informal Island Council Meeting.

13. 6th Form scholarships

After a public meeting, a question was raised about 6th Form Scholarships. JM submitted guidelines on how to apply and what criteria must be met; these include:

- Students need to have completed two full years at Prince Andrews to obtain the scholarship;
- If students who have done their primary and secondary schooling on Ascension complete their 6th form at Prince Andrews, then they can apply for scholarship;
- Students then have to apply for university as normal;

- Then they can apply for the Scholarship;
- Scholarship includes study fees, subsistence allowance, books, stationery, annual networking event and access to a student advisor; and
- Commonwealth Scholarships are still available and should also be applied for.
- Clear guidelines will be published

It is important that students at Two Boats School are made aware of this and take advantage of the Scholarships.

14. AOB

- KG raised concerns from the public around the new Immigration Post that had been recently advertised. MH stated that it was essential for Ascension Island to comply with international standards around border control. There were over 5,000 visitors expected in the next year and while the police run the border, all the admin was currently done by the Administrator and one assistant and this was no longer feasible. The new position was advertised for a two year contract as this person needed to manage the project and oversee the change, write policies, and implement new IT systems and checks. FCO will fund some of the new equipment that may be required. In addition to this a new visa pricing strategy will be implemented, which should result in the post becoming cost neutral. It is vitally important that AIG provide adequate security for the employers and military bases on the island.
- KG asked if the RMS schedule would be extended. The Governor was in the process of trying to extend the current schedule and is hopeful that the final one should be completed after a visit to the UK at the beginning of November. The Governor would also raise the question if cheaper tickets could be made available to encourage more passengers on the RMS.
- JE raised concerns around a recent recruitment process; the Administrator assured all that correct procedures had been followed in the form of an open recruitment process and this resulted in the most qualified person being offered the role.
- SAL said that some people in the community felt unable to apply for advertised posts. The Administrator said that new ways of advertising were attracting very strong candidates and that the most appropriate candidate would be offered the job, regardless of where they were from. MH stated that a number of courses were going to be offered to AIG employees to promote the development of basic skills and IT literacy.
- Councillors raised concerns over a recent non-renewal of contract: WS requested that the issue be raised formally in writing so that the correct formal response could be offered for that individual. MH stated that the renewal process was being reviewed so that there would be certainty and clarity around which procedure should be followed going forward.
- JE asked if there could be a better way of arranging accommodation when people have to go off island for medical reasons. JM said there was no set policy in place; however there were guidelines that AIG had to stay within. All Councillors agreed

that more information would be required at time of booking so that appropriate facilities could be obtained.

- SAL raised concerns over confidentiality when speaking to HR as they felt there was not enough private space. WS requested that the individual concerned should put their view to the HR Director via email.
- MD asked if a coin-operated meter be installed at the Boatyard for electricity and water – similar to what AIC have access to.
- The Administrator has requested any councillors that have specific HR concerns hold a meeting with Dean Hambleton-Ayling to raise these issues formally. This took place on 2 November.

The Administrator thanked all for attending and contributing to the meeting. It was agreed that the next Formal Island Council Meeting will take place after 5pm to allow others to attend. Councillors are reminded to send any dates that they won't be available, to Nicola Dillon, in order to facilitate the last Formal Island Council Meeting of the year.

Meeting formally closed at 11:40.