

MINUTES OF THE ASCENSION ISLAND COUNCIL

MEETING HELD IN THE COURT HOUSE,

Thursday, 17th May 2018 at 16:30hrs

Present: HE the Governor Lisa Honan
HH Administrator Justine Allan
Sara O'Donnell, Attorney General
Mark Neale, Crown Counsel
Jamie Manson, Director of Resources
Councillor Nicholas John
Councillor Jacqui Ellick
Councillor Terence Young
Councillor Kitty George

In attendance: Emma Corrigan, Clerk of Council

Apologies: Councillor Samantha Arms-Lawrence
Andrew Sigley, Foreign Office

1. Welcome

The Administrator welcomed all to the meeting. The Governor, Lisa Honan, was pleased to be able to attend in person, as was Sara O'Donnell, the Attorney General.

2. Approval of Minutes from 03 May 2018

All present agreed the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising / Action Points – update

HH Administrator thanked the Clerk to the Council for having collated all outstanding action points from the last year to ensure actions are completed. The list was reviewed:

Biosecurity Ordinance: The action for the drafting of a Biosecurity Ordinance was on hold until the new Director of Conservation arrived in June 2018. HE the Governor suggested St Helena sent a copy of their Ordinance as a guide.

Action: The Attorney General / Mark Neale to arrange for a copy of the Biosecurity Ordinance on St Helena to be sent to AIG

Employment Law: HE Governor explained this had been deferred following the closure of the Air bridge, Cllr Ellick added it had gone to the State Department in America for their comments. Mr Manson added that a response had been received but had been put on hold until after the Ministerial Meeting determined the future working model of the island.

Decision: HH Administrator stated this item was to be added to the agenda for the next Council meeting for discussion on the progress made to date and key issues.

Appointment of new roles/operational decisions: The previous Administrator had suggested re-iteration of what lay within the Council's competence following Councillors' questions raised over the reasons why the Chief Immigration Officer and Crown Counsel had visited St Helena and the appointment of a new Assistant Director of Operations. This role had not been advertised; if it had other possible candidates would have applied. HE Governor stressed the role of the Council was to pass laws and the budget was a law. After the budget was approved by the Council at the beginning of the financial year the breakdown spend of the budget became operational and was not within the Council's role. Mr Manson added that all expenditure was fully audited and if AIG had not spent the budget in line with the law that was adopted by the Council then the audit exposed this. In addition the Finance Committee met to go through the budget in for the next financial year in detail.

Action: The Attorney General stated the competence of the Island Council lay within the Constitution and should be summarised in simple terms by the Crown Counsel and then circulated to all the Council members.

Excessive dust in Two Boats Village: A resident in Two Boats Village had brought to Cllr John's attention an area of excessive dust within the village. Cllr John raised this at the Council meeting held on 5th April. The issue was reported to the Director of Operations who arranged for clinker to be laid. Cllr John reported the resident had confirmed this action had been completed.

French lessons in school: Concerns had been raised by parents over the loss of French as a GCSE option in future years. Mr Manson explained there was a part-time French teacher available but only until March 2019; the demand for French was low so did not warrant a full time French teacher, however children lower down the school might have wanted to study French up to GCSE in future. Should a modern foreign language teacher be recruited then the total cost to AIG was in the region of £48,000 per annum and would subsequently affect the loss of another resource. Parents were frustrated as opinion was education should not be one area that suffered a funding deficit. The Administrator added that many parents had requested a creche for pre-school aged children but it was not possible to fund both with the finite budget available. The School Strategy ensured the core curriculum was taught and French was not a core subject. Cllr George confirmed a meeting with parents was to be held to discuss this topic and would feedback at the next Council meeting.

Action: Cllr George and Cllr John have been asked to meet with some Two Boat parents to discuss the requirement for French in the future. Councillors would report back on the meeting at Council meeting on 07 June.

Hydroponics update: Director of Operations was to set monthly Hydroponics Committee meetings. The Hydroponics Manager had circulated an update and Director of Operations was to submit an update to the Islander for the following week.

E-Visa System: Jim Horton was to send the guidelines on the reasons a visa could be declined to all Councillors.

Small Business Permit Application: A small business permit (residential) application had been received from Mr John to provide an independent corrosion control service on the island. The application had been reviewed by the Council and the Administrator ahead of the Council meeting as the service tender deadline was 20 April.

Decision: The application had been approved and the permit issued by the Administrator

Application from Glamour to add car cleaning products to current permit: The owner of Glamour had asked if it would be permissible to sell car cleaning products under "household goods" stated in the current Small Business Permit (Retail).

Decision: Councillors had agreed to this and no amendment was to be made to the current permit

Benches for George Thomas & Ray Ellick: The Administrator had approached Blue Marine for funding but they declined so was researching into whether someone on island could make some benches from some surplus wood.

Optician: Members of the public had raised concerns over the optician's methods and equipment as eye tests had been carried out and people had been told their eyesight was fine. However, the same people had received eye tests when in the UK and had actually needed glasses. Mr Manson confirmed the optician was fully qualified and due on the island in the near future but would look into other options for visiting opticians.

Action: Mr Manson to research other options for a visiting optician to the island in future.

4. Spearfishing Ordinance / Swimming

A) Proposed Spearfishing / Lance fishing restricted area

The Council had been on a visit around the island and after much discussion it was decided that no spearfishing and lance fishing was permitted in the area between Two Hook and Eddie's Gullies at English Bay but could be done anywhere else on the island. Swimming and line fishing would be permitted in this area and the restriction on entering the water was to be lifted. All agreed the Ordinance would be for a fixed period of 12 months and would be reviewed towards the end of this period; the Attorney General confirmed that it was possible to extend, amend or revoke the order at that point. It was also important to remember that as the proposed ordinance would impact the whole island then the Employing Organisations and the public should be advised in advance. Cllr John asked what the penalties would be if someone was found in breach of the proposed Spearfishing Ordinance and Mark Neale advised a fine of up to £5000 and a prison sentence of up to 6 months.

B) Spearfishing Licences / Spear gun register

It had been proposed to create a register of spear guns so the Council were aware of what spear guns were already on the island and to regulate what type of spear gun was brought on to the island in the future. Those residents in possession of a spear gun would require a licence, with the licence imposing a minimal cost, and would regulate safe storage of those spear guns. Mr Manson added it could be beneficial to refer to the Inshore Fisheries Ordinance. The Attorney General stated SHG had been working on the Inshore Fisheries Ordinance on St Helena so would be able to support AIG on this.

C) Fishing licences / Chumming

The Administrator stated we required a definition of chumming if it was to be included on future fishing licences. The Attorney General advised that St Helena Government had not used a specific terminology but instead had set out those activities that concerned fish waste that were prohibited.

D) Guidelines associated with entering the water

Guidelines would be issued every 3 months that outlined the risks involved in entering the water around the island so all visitors and new arrivals were aware of those risks. Mark Neale to draft the guidelines and circulate to the Council

Actions: Mark Neale to draft the Spearfishing / Lance fishing Ordinance for further consideration at the next Council meeting on 7 June. This would then be presented at the formal Council meeting for approval.

Mark Neale to request a copy of the Inshore Fisheries Ordinance from SHG

Mark Neale to draft guidelines on the risks associated on entering the water and circulate to the Council

Justine Allan to speak with the Heads of Sheds regarding this proposed Ordinance

Councillors to advise the public of the proposed Ordinance

5. Any Other Business

5.1. Application for the sale of car parts by Kurt Peters:

Kurt Peters had applied for a small business permit to sell household electrical items and wanted to add car parts to the permit.

Decision: All Councillors agreed that Kurt Peters could sell car parts on his small business permit

5.2. Election Ordinance – request for amendments

Mark Neale explained the current Election Ordinance stated the ballot paper was to be marked with the polling station stamp on both sides and it was proposed to only stamp the reverse of the paper. Secondly the Polling Stations were opened for 12 hours to allow the electors to vote and it had been suggested to reduce the opening times. In addition, deadline for candidate nominations was 6.00pm and it was proposed to reduce this to the time of close of business.

The Councillors agreed to review the stamping of ballot papers.

Cllr George did not agree to the proposal to reduce the opening times of the polling stations as it allowed for those working shifts to vote.

Nomination deadline was agreed to be reduced to 4.30pm but to possibly extend the period within which nominations could be received.

Action: Mark Neale to amend Election Ordinance and present the amended draft at the meeting on Thursday 07 June.

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 1830hrs.

Emma Corrigan
Clerk to the Island Council