

MINUTES OF THE ASCENSION ISLAND COUNCIL

MEETING HELD IN THE COURT HOUSE,

Thursday, 28th June 2018 at 16:30hrs

Present: HE the Governor Lisa Honan (by phone)
HH Administrator Justine Allan
Sara O'Donnell, Attorney General (by phone)
Mark Neale, Crown Counsel
Catherine Leo, Asst Director of Finance
Charlie Henning, Asst Director of HR
Councillor Nicholas John
Councillor Jacqui Ellick
Councillor Terence Young
Councillor Kitty George
Councillor Samantha Arms-Lawrence

In attendance: Emma Corrigan, Clerk of Council

Apologies: Jamie Manson, Director of Resources (DoR)
Andrew Sigley, Foreign Office

1. Welcome

The Administrator welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes from 07 June 2018

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

3. Matters Arising / Action Points – update

Biosecurity Ordinance: The action for the drafting of a Biosecurity Ordinance had been on hold until the Director of Conservation, Diane Baum, arrived earlier this month. Diane was liaising with Gillian Keys in London regarding funding for Overseas Territories to develop Biodiversity legislation. Work was currently on-going with the Falkland Islands and would assist in the drafting of the ordinance for Ascension Island early next year. HE The Governor advised that the Biosecurity Ordinance for St Helena lay within their Environmental Protection Ordinance.

Action: This item to be put on hold until early next year with Crown Counsel providing regular updates in the interim period.

Crown Counsel to look at the Environmental Protection Ordinance for St Helena to locate the section on Biosecurity for reference.

Employment Law: Crown Counsel reported work was on-going.

Action: Crown Counsel to ensure all changes in the current document were tracked.

Appointment of new roles/operational decisions: The Administrator had included the role and responsibilities of a Councillor in the next update for The Islander to help inform the public what Councillors could assist with.

Hydroponics update: Questions had been put to Councillors in the recent public meetings regarding the type of pest control used at the site. The Administrator would request a further update from the Hydroponics manager and report back.

Action: Further update to be provided by the Hydroponics Manager

Benches for George Thomas & Ray Ellick: The Administrator wanted to increase the number of benches for public use so had approached the Policy and Projects Officer, Alasdair Bain, to research this further together with provision of tables and fish-waste bins at popular fishing sites so the Administrator suggested this action be closed. Cllr John requested AIG reduced the requests for funding from Blue Marine in future. The

Administrator noted how much funding was received by Blue Marine to the benefit of all e.g. tablets for schoolchildren, repairs to the boardwalk, and funding to restore the Turtle Ponds.

Decision: This action to be closed

Optician: Members of the public had raised concerns over the Optician's methods and it had been suggested another Optician be found for future visits. The Administrator explained the current Optician also covered St Helena, Tristan da Cunha and the Falkland Islands and should sufficient numbers of concerns be raised then Dr Hardy would be asked to approach an alternative optician. The Governor confirmed she had also raised this issue with the Director of Health for St Helena and would report back with an update. The Governor suggested that AIG could create a process in which complaints on healthcare could be dealt with confidentially via HR in preference to complaints being submitted through Councillors. All Councillors agreed with this. The Attorney General advised complaints in St Helena could be completed online.

Action: Asst Director of HR to research St Helena's complaints procedure for healthcare for guidance in setting up a similar process on Ascension.

MPA update:

The Administrator advised the Policy & Projects Officer, Alasdair Bain, had worked on this subject for DEFRA in London and had suggested we circulate a position paper on the MPA to share information on this important issue. The aim of the paper was to set out clearly what an MPA would mean for Ascension to enable the Council to make an informed decision. It was noted that not all the information would be available in this first paper, but that as more scientific data became available, it would be shared with the Council. Blue Marine had begun to draft a paper for 100% MPA for Ascension and 160 MPs were already in agreement with the current Government MPA proposal, so it was important that Ascension Island submitted their view first of an MPA. Cllr John stated Ascension Island had previously stated the MPA was not wanted but the decision for one had been made despite this.

Action: Alasdair Bair to circulate the proposal for consideration.

Sheep in Two Boats Village: The Administrator stated that it had been reported that sheep had learned how to jump fences and cattle grids as attracted to any food source. Many residents have also raised concern over the condition of the sheep and whether they posed a health risk. One long term solution was eradication of sheep on the island and should the whole community opt for this solution then AIG would look to appoint an expert to conduct a cull humanely and professionally. The Administrator recognised this was a very sensitive issue. Cllr John stated this had been an issue for years so was not a new problem so Councillors should seek public consensus on what the solution should be.

Action: Councillors to seek public opinion as to what the long term solution to the sheep on the island should be.

Donkeys in Georgetown Cemetery: The Administrator had spoken with the Asst Director of Operations who had proposed to mend the perimeter fence by erecting an internal fence to protect the cemetery while the permanent fencing was completed. The Administrator apologised for any distress caused by these events.

Child was permitted to sit exam in Head Teachers Office: Councillors had been asked to determine why one child had been permitted to sit exams in the Head Teachers office and not in the main hall with the other exam candidates. The Head Teacher had explained the reason behind this case but the Administrator stressed this should not have been a Council matter as was not the forum to discuss the educational needs of one child over others. Parents should be encouraged to approach the school directly with future concerns.

4. Spear Gun Ordinance

The Administrator stated the public meetings had raised the suggestion of conducting a public survey and asked Councillors for their views. The Governor stressed that Councillors must listen to the public and then make a decision that was in the best interests of the public, having taken into consideration both general opinion and the professional advice received on whether to adopt the proposed Spear Gun Ordinance. The Councillors decided a survey would be conducted to assist the Council with their final decision. The Administrator advised the Head of Wolf Creek had requested statistics concerning the number of shark

incidents over the last 10 years before they would consider lifting the ban on their staff from entering the water. These statistics could be provided by Conservation Department.

Action: A survey would be held, the results collated and presented to the next Council meeting. The survey was to be circulated as widely as possible as the proposed ordinance would become legislation and would affect all on Ascension.
Conservation to compile statistics on the number of shark incidents in Ascension waters over the last 10 years.

5. Election Ordinance – amendments

Further to previous discussion it was proposed to amend Regulation 6 of the Elections Regulations, 2008 to state the deadline for receipt of candidate nominations was 4.30pm and not 6.00pm on the given date. The second amendment was under Regulation 11 (2) and would revoke paragraph (a) by the substitution of “mark the ballot paper on the reverse sides with the official mark”.

Decision: All Councillors approved these amendments and recommended these changes be made by the Governor.

6. Part-Time French Teacher

An advertisement for a fixed-term part time French and Geography teacher had been issued and the Head Teacher was working towards a long-term solution for the future. Candidates for future teacher training were eligible for the post graduate certificate in education if they had already gained a university degree.

7. Any Other Business

7.1. Application for Small Business Permit – Atlantic Jewels

Ricki Williams of Wolf Creek had applied for a small business permit to sell jewellery from her place of residence on the US Base. Major Harris had approved this as Base Commander. The Administrator outlined her suggestion of holding a regular fair/car-boot sale where both people could sell their wares on a Saturday morning in Georgetown Square; AIG would provide tables if required.

Decision: All Councillors approved the permit

7.2. Application for Small Business Permit – Coleman’s Hire Cars

Derek Coleman of Babcock had applied for a small business permit to hire cars from his place of residence. Paul Mildon as Station Manager for Babcock had approved this.

Decision: All Councillors approved the permit

7.3 11th European Development Fund – (EDF11)

The allocation of €1.075m to Ascension was to be received in two payments in 2020 and the second in 2022. The Administrator explained the CSSF award of £5m was to be received over the next 2 years and then then first portion of the EDF11 allocation would arrive after that and had asked the Policy & Projects Officer, Alasdair Bain, to begin researching possible community projects. The Administrator confirmed having reported to London the requirement for a replacement ambulance, procurement experts had indicated the model to be purchased primarily through Global Britain Funding with the deficit funded from the CSSF money. Cllr John asked for confirmation that CSSF money did not fall under the remit of the elected council members to which the Administrator confirmed this was correct as the funding was received via the FCO. Cllr Arms-Lawrence suggested some of the fund could be spent on further hospital renovations. The Governor added there had been several infrastructure reports done in past years and these could be used to assist in prioritising where the funds were spent.

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 1800hrs.

Emma Corrigan
Clerk of Council