



Informal meeting of the Ascension Island Council

1630 on Thursday 11th April 2019 at the Court House

MEETING SUMMARY

Present:	Steven Chandler, Administrator Gareth Morris, Director of Resources Allen Cansick, Acting Attorney General	Councillor Nicholas John Councillor Alan Nicholls Councillor Terence Young
In attendance:	Dee Baum, Director of Conservation & Fisheries Sarah Roberts-Favell, Head of Administrator's Office Jane Disley, Clerk of Council	Apologies: Councillor Samantha Arms-Lawrence Councillor Keturah George (overseas)

1./2. Welcome and Matters Arising

2.a) Summary of Council protocols

Update & decision: A copy of a 2009 'Rules of procedure' had come to light which might prove useful in forming the basis of an updated summary of Council protocols. Its provenance would need to be reviewed to determine whether it was a draft or if it had been adopted.

Action: Acting Attorney General to investigate further and report back.

Action: Administrator to circulate the copy for councillors' information.

2.c) Firearms Ordinance

Update & decision: The draft would need to be reviewed by Council so that it could take a view on the proposed policy, which originated in St Helena, to ensure it was suitable for Ascension.

Action: Acting Attorney General to circulate to councillors.

2.d) BoSH bank card

Update & decision: There had been no progress, but the Assistant Manager of BoSH was due to visit Ascension for a month from 13 Apr and he/she might be able to provide specific information.

Action: Dir Res to seek a meeting with the Asst Mgr BoSH, and possibly invite him/her to the next informal Council meeting.

2.e) Ordinance Review

Update & decision: This would be a major piece of work and would therefore best sit with the new Crown Counsel (due on island August 2019).

Action: Acting Attorney General to pass on to Crown Counsel in due course.

2.e) Road Safety Ordinance

Update: The Clerk had placed this on the draft agenda for review and discussion at the next formal meeting.

2.f) Letter to Lord Ahmad

Update: The letter (covering a number of post-JMC issues, incl. civilian access) had been sent and was being considered in London.

3. JMC points for discussion at formal meeting

Update & decision: These had been covered at the formal meeting held on 28 February. The Administrator took the opportunity to advise the Council that at its recent meeting on 4 April the AISC had agreed to look at updating its policies to include vulnerable adults.

Action: **The new Social Worker (due on island in August 2019) would be asked to follow up this work.**

4. Medical complaints procedure from St Helena

Update & decision: There had been no progress on this issue in the absence of key contributors. It would need to be followed up with the return of relevant AIG staff.

Action: **The SMO and Projects & Policy Officer to review and provide feedback at the next informal meeting.**

3. Animal health and welfare

The 'Animal Welfare on Ascension Island – Summary of Options' paper had been circulated ahead of the meeting. Dir Cons talked through the options and councillors provided feedback on each. No additional options were proposed. Responses to the options presented are summarised below.

Domestic animals
1. Status quo
Potential residents with pets need more information in advance about the risks, eg no vet, and especially about the costs which can build considerably, eg boat, vaccinations, transport of food. This provision of info would be helped if AIG had a better website, which was still being investigated. Registration for dogs, possibly with licence fee, was considered. People will always look to AIG to fill any gap with regard to animal care/welfare so if we keep the status quo we accept the risk of having to pick up those responsibilities/costs. People must take all reasonable steps to ensure their pet leaves Ascension before they do. Consider a deposit to ensure this or not awarding gratuity until responsibility fulfilled. Provision of kennelling services might present a local business opportunity.
2. Prohibit the import of domestic animals to Ascension
Considered too extreme – discounted.
3. Increase frequency and length of vet visits
Approx £1000 per visit (1 night only). Could be scope to expand to more than one visit a year. Asking for contributions from pet owners to cover cost of additional visits was considered.
4. Train someone on island to act as a 'lay vet'.
Expensive. Skills lost when the person leaves. Problem with obtaining/dispensing drugs. Potential legal/liability issues, so AIG could not officially endorse. However, if a volunteer were to come forward and cover their own costs they would not be discouraged.

Action – domestic animals: **Projects & Policy Officer to continue to explore options and suggestions for improving communication about risks/costs, for minimising instances of pets**

being abandoned and for providing care when pets are unavoidably left behind [option 1].

Action – domestic animals: Projects & Policy Officer to further research possibilities for additional vet cover from St Helena [option 3].

Donkeys
1. Status quo
Not an ideal option: the current population is not healthy due to inbreeding and poor food supply. We have to do <i>something</i> to manage the population humanely.
2. Sterilisation
Population would eventually die out over 40 years or so. It would be a slow solution but conditions would improve for existing donkeys in the meantime: fewer/no pregnancies, more food to share, less aggression among male donkeys. Some preparatory work would be needed, eg tagging to confirm numbers.
3. Relocation
The Sanctuary on St Helena is the only practical relocation site, but they may not be able to accept the large numbers of donkeys from Ascension and conditions are not ideal there due to the wet ground. Contact should be made with the St Helena Sanctuary to gauge their opinion. If they were willing to accept the donkeys, then transportation would still be an obstacle.
4. Cull
Too extreme and would be unpopular – discount.
5. Sanctuary [on Ascension]
This would be a significant undertaking. Could get funding help initially but if/when it ran out AIG would have to step in to provide for general care, food, vet etc.

Action – donkeys: Policy & Projects Officer to further research the sterilisation option and how best to implement it then report back – to include liaison with Tristan da Cunha which had taken similar steps in the past [option 2].

Action – donkeys: Policy & Projects Officer to follow up liaison with the donkey sanctuary on St Helena to explore any possible options in more detail [option 3/4].

Decision: Although little was known about the general health of the population, the sheep were not considered to have such pressing problems, and so more time was needed to consider whether or not any action was required.

4. Inshore Fisheries Advisory Committee (IFAC) briefing

The 'Briefing on Inshore Fisheries Advisory Committee (IFAC)' paper had been circulated ahead of the meeting. The paper asked the Council for feedback on whether or not they were content with the proposed method by which the IFAC would contribute to the development of an Inshore Fisheries Ordinance and the ongoing management of the fishery. The Council were unanimous in their endorsement of the IFAC work and its value in providing data and evidence for decisions about management of the Ascension inshore fisheries areas. Some work had been done previously on preparation of an ordinance which might prove useful to this process.

The IFAC would continue to report via the Council rather than having a Council member as part of the group in order that they remain independent. The Biodiversity Committee might provide a

good route for the IFAC to liaise with the Council in the future.

5. Any Other Business

- a) Amendment to income tax ordinance: Dir Res advised of an imminent minor change to the income tax ordinance. The current ordinance refers to certain companies by name and so this would be updated to ensure it remains relevant and accurate.
- b) Minor budget adjustment – Council approval required: A small error in the published budget figure needs to be corrected; this requires an amendment to the ordinance. Dir Res would submit the amended Ordinance at the next formal meeting.
- c) Record of Council meetings: The Administrator made the following proposals, both of which were agreed:
 - i. Formal meetings: 1-page summary of formal meetings to be produced straight after the meeting, circulated to Council for speedy approval then published. Full minutes would be produced, and agreed as usual at the next formal meeting but this process takes much longer.
Action: Clerk to produce 1-page summary from next formal meeting onwards.
 - ii. Informal meetings: Summary of informal meetings to be produced that are less comprehensive than a full set of minutes but that would still include key discussion points, decisions and actions. Where appropriate because of the topic, eg the MPA or budget, more detail could be included.
Action: Clerk to produce summary instead of minutes for informal meetings from now on.
- d) Dental cover: AIG has requested periodic locum cover from the RAF via an existing MoU to cover the period before the new dentist arrives – likely to arrive on island in August. Emergencies would continue to be covered by Dr Bill/Dr Bianca.

6. Date of next meetings

The following forthcoming dates have been agreed:

- Informal meeting – 24 Apr 19
- Formal – 9 May 2019

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 1815hrs.

J Disley

Jane Disley

Clerk of Council