



Informal meeting of the Ascension Island Council

1630 on Thursday 2nd May 2019 at the Court House

MEETING SUMMARY

Present: Steven Chandler, Administrator
Gareth Morris, Director of Resources
Councillor Samantha Arms-Lawrence
Councillor Keturah George
Councillor Nicholas John
Councillor Alan Nicholls
Councillor Terence Young

In attendance: Sarah Roberts-Favell, Head of Administrator's Office
Dr Bill Hardy, Senior Medical Officer
Alasdair Bain, Policy & Projects Officer
Diana Benjamin, Compliance & Operations Officer, BoSH
Jane Disley, Clerk of Council

Apologies:
Allen Cansick, Acting Attorney General

1./2>Welcome and Matters arising (from last informal meeting on 11 April 2019 – updates in italics)

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.**

Update: *A/AG not present: held over to next informal meeting.*

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

Update: *Hard copy taken away by A/AG; Administrator to arrange for it to be scanned and circulated.*

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.**

Update: *A/AG not present: held over to next informal meeting.*

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.**

Update: *See item 4 below for update*

2.e) Road Safety Ordinance

Update: The Clerk had placed this on the agenda of the next formal meeting on 16 May.

Update: *Councillors were reminded that after discussion about the term 'medical assistants' the policy had been returned to St Helena to be reworded. Additional minor changes were then proposed and the amended version would need to be presented to the Council for review and approval.*

4. Medical complaints procedure from St Helena

Update: *A draft 'Complaints' policy and 'Charter of Patients' Rights' for Ascension had been prepared several years ago ahead of the ISO review but they had never been agreed and adopted. A recent review had been undertaken to combine the draft 'Complaints' policy document with the St Helena policy to create a suitable policy/procedure covering access to health care on Ascension. The combined draft would be ready for circulation to councillors once minor legal aspects had been addressed. At that point feedback could be received/managed via email or via further discussion at a Council meeting if required.*

Action: **The SMO and Projects & Policy Officer to finalise the draft once legal input had been received, and recirculate it to councillors for review.**

Action: **Councillors to review the draft once circulated and provide feedback before 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.

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].**

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

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].**

Update: *The Policy & Projects Officer provided an update and sought to establish, especially with regard to donkeys, the driving force behind the desire to move forward with animal welfare. Specifically, he asked whether it was welfare of the donkeys or if they constitute a health & safety issue/nuisance/menace to humans? Although there were some nuisance issues related to feral animals, the primary driver appeared to be the welfare aspect. However, given the number of attempts to resolve these issues in the past it was clear that there would be no single or easy solution. Further investigation was required and a trial and error approach to the options might be helpful.*

The continued presence of the SMO allowed for some discussion about care for sick animals in the absence of on-island vet cover. It was confirmed that he and the S/MO would continue to

provide ad-hoc care for animals to the best of their ability, but this was an informal arrangement that depended on goodwill. Therefore there should be no basis on which to consider a need for indemnity cover.

It was agreed that thorough research into previous discussions and activities should be undertaken in order to prepare meaningful options for review and possible trial. However, Cllr John noted that with nothing in place currently a short term plan was also needed in case of sick or injured animals.

Action: Policy & Projects Officer to continue with previously agreed actions. This would include a thorough investigation of earlier animal welfare activity and the findings would be drawn together into one document, primarily focussing on donkeys, which would present meaningful options for discussion and potential trial.

3. Look ahead to formal meeting on 16 May 19

The Clerk confirmed that the Minutes from the formal meetings held on 28 Feb and 25 Mar had been reviewed, revised as required and finalised and were therefore ready for formal approval on 16 May.

The Administrator proposed the following additional items for inclusion on the agenda for 16 May:

- Ordinances to be amended: 2019-20 Budget, Income tax, Road safety
- An amendment to the Currency Ordinance covering commemorative coins, might possibly be ready for review

The meeting would also provide an opportunity for the Council to welcome the new Governor (given it will be his first meeting).

Councillors also suggested the Council might hold a discussion on the Waste Management strategy and operation.

Decision: It was agreed to use the opportunity to take a photo of the current Council in order to update the website.

Decision: It was also agreed that all meetings - formal and informal - would take place at 1630 from now on.

4. BoSH bank card

The Compliance & Operations Officer provided an update on work to introduce a BoSH pre-loadable card. Negotiations had taken place with a preferred company and the product offered was now being tested. The Ascension branch of the bank now has a reasonable supply of Sterling and work is also underway to obtain SA Rand for customers travelling from Ascension. The Ascension branch is now operating with a chip and pin reader, and the bank hope to be able to offer debit cards for all local customers soon. Councillors asked if the information provided could be made available to the public, perhaps via employers who would know those employees due to travel in the near future.

Action: The Compliance & Operations Officer agreed to share pertinent information. She also said that there would be notices at the bank and a public notice would be circulated once the SA Rand was available.

5. Any other business

- a) Employment Law update: on at the request of Councillor George, the Administrator set out his understanding of the history of this item to date. He had reviewed previous Council Minutes and documents. He noted that the US State Department had expressed some objections to the proposed legislation in July/August 2017. At around the same time (in September 2017) the Council had agreed to pause work on the legislation until the future of Ascension work had been concluded. This was because without this conclusion it would be difficult to develop a law, a large and complicated piece of legislation with many new concepts, that would be fit for purpose. He hoped the recent pick up in pace of the future of Ascension work would mean a conclusion to that work and a ministerial determination by the end of the year or shortly thereafter. He had consulted the Governor and the FCO's Overseas Territories Directorate, and together their collective advice was to continue to pause work on the law and wait for the Ascension model to be agreed so that a new employment law would be pertinent to the agreed Ascension model. The Administrator noted councillors' desire to see some work continue in the meantime. In the absence of a Crown Counsel and an Attorney General, and in the temporary absence on leave of the Asst Dir HR, no work could be progressed at present. He agreed to consider whether the new Crown Counsel, Rob Cheeseman, who is due to arrive in August, could pick up this work once he had established himself in his new role.
- b) Runway update: The Administrator provided an update on the runway project and confirmed that a public notice would be circulated the next day. The earliest date for contract award had shifted from summer to autumn 2019. Tender Board still expects the project to be completed in the second half of 2021.
- c) Fire & Rescue expert visit: The Administrator noted the visit by Graham McKenzie (UK Fire Service College) and offered the opportunity for councillors to meet him.
- d) New Governor: The Administrator confirmed that the new Governor, Dr Philip Rushbrook, was hoping to visit as soon as possible. Once dates had been confirmed the Council would be informed.
- e) New USAF Cdr: The Administrator confirmed that Maj Bouffard was due to leave on 10 Jul. His replacement, Major Vincent (Vinnie) Bongioanni, was due to arrive on 24 June.
- f) Biosecurity legislation: Dee Baum, Vicki Knight and Kazz Singh were due to travel to St Helena in May to understand their regulations, and the practicalities of inspection and enforcement. This would help inform AIG's forthcoming work on a draft Biosecurity Ordinance.
- g) Dental cover: Work was still underway to confirm the details of periodic locum cover from the RAF. Emergencies would continue to be covered by Dr Bill/Dr Bianca.
- h) Operations update: Cllr Young asked if Dir Ops could provide an update on unfinished projects, eg turtle ponds and Georgetown pool, before his departure on 2 months' leave.
Action: Administrator to ask Dir Ops to provide an update.
- i) Petrol: Cllr Young asked why petrol could only be dispensed into cans and expressed concern about the safety implications of having numerous petrol cans stored awaiting

collection. The Administrator noted the very good news that petrol was once again being dispensed at the fuel station. He explained that the temporary arrangement to dispense only into cans and not cars was because the current dispenser nozzle was meant for diesel and so was the wrong size. A petrol nozzle had been ordered and was due to arrive via the next RAF flight. A public notice would be issued once this issue had been sorted. He offered to explore the safety issue with Dir Ops.

Action: Administrator to raise safety concern with Dir Ops and issue a public notice once petrol could be dispensed direct to vehicles.

6. Date of next meetings

The following forthcoming dates have been agreed:

- Formal – 16 May 2019 at 1630
- Informal – 30 May 2019 at 1630
- Informal – 13 Jun 2019 at 1630

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 1820hrs.

J Disley

Jane Disley

Clerk of Council

Items pending further review [11 Apr meeting]:

2.e) Ordinances 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.

The new Crown Counsel was expected to arrive in August 2019

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.

The new Social Worker was expected to arrive in August 2019