

**ASCENSION ISLAND
GOVERNMENT**

Clerk of Council's Office
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Informal meeting of the Ascension Island Council

10:00 on Wednesday 23rd May 2024 at the Courthouse

MEETING SUMMARY

Present: HH Simon Minshull, Administrator
Director of Resources, Peter Thomas
Councillor Kyla Benjamin
Councillor Kerry Benjamin
Councillor Alan Nicholls
Councillor Laura Shearer

In attendance: Carl Mackerras, Head of Administrator's Office
Matthew James, Crown Counsel
Denise John, Clerk to Council

Apologies:
Councillor Gordon Worthington

The Administrator welcomed all parties and thanked everyone for attending.

Matters Arising

Actions tracker.

Pets on the FIRS: The Administrator reported that BFSAI has confirmed Pets only belonging to MOD Military Personnel and MOD Civil Servants will be carried on the FIRS. Councillor Shearer raised concern that some residents were not aware of this and asked how animals already on-island would be shipped back in future, given that it was not known how long MOD would continue to honour the shipment of pets back to UK. The Administrator confirmed the issue had been raised with the FCDO and that a Public Notice will provide an update. This item is removed from the Actions Tracker.

Future Vet Visit Plans: Carl Mackerras, HoAO, informed councillors that Mr David Mills, Director of Facilities and Operations met with the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) during his visit to the Falkland Islands. The CVO, in principle, was happy to provide a veterinary service to Ascension. St Helena Vet visits are still being explored now that a Vet is employed on St Helena. Details of both options are being clarified and considered.

Memorandum – Statement of Expenditure in Excess of Monies Appropriated for FY 2022/23

The DoR advised Councillors that a Statement has been provided and HE the Governor informed, as per the Constitution, for the areas of expenditure in excess of monies appropriated for the financial year 2022/23. Councillor Nicholls queried how there managed to be an overspend in relation to Corporation Tax. DoR said this was a provision for corporation tax due, no tax debt had been written off.

Any other business:

The Administrator said the Ascension One Island Vision Statement which flowed from the FCDO/MOD visit in November 2023 has been signed off by UK Government Ministers. The document will be shared with Councillors and circulated to the community via the Islander, and a Public Notice. The Administrator said the Statement is based around four main objectives: Defence operations and security, Resilient infrastructure, Sustainability and environment and Community and sets a framework for the AIG to work together with key on and off island partners.

The Administrator advised that following the announcement of a UK general election, there was no indication of an impact on the planned visit by FCDO officials in June in relation to work on the Overseas Territory Strategy compact discussions.

HoAO said a Climate Security Assessment paper would be circulated to councillors for their comments and feedback by the middle of next week.

The Administrator relayed thanks from the visiting FCDO Economist (Mr Jigar Amin) and Ascension Desk Officer (Miss Ailsa Hearne) passed on their thanks to councillors for their feedback during their Financial Review Mission visit. The draft report is expected in the next few weeks.

Councillor Nicholls said he received an email from the Cayman Islands Government's Representative to the United Kingdom asking if Ascension would be sending a representative to the COP29 conference. The Administrator said no representation is usually sent. The Administrator undertook to send a response to the Cayman rep.

Councillor Kerry Benjamin asked, as submitted via a councillor enquiry form, if the MV Karoline could call at Ascension earlier than August 2024. The Administrator said this was unlikely as it is only just over 2 months away and an earlier arrival did not give enough lead time for the public businesses to place orders. It would also impact on the schedule in November or December. The Administrator will provide a full response to Councillor Benjamin's enquiry in writing.

Councillor Kerry Benjamin queried whether AIG is able to check on out of date goods that are on sale and past their sell by dates in shops. Crown Counsel said laws do exist to carry out environmental health inspection but traders have discretion to sell canned goods after their best before dates. Public Health Inspections are conducted. The Administrator agreed to liaise with the Conservation Directorate to confirm when Environmental Health Inspections are next scheduled for.

Councillor Shearer raised the issue of Starlink increasing their prices and asked if AIG would look into providing a licence for Starlink and providing a more affordable internet for users. A councillor enquiry form on this subject has also been raised by Councillor Kyla Benjamin. Crown Counsel said that unfortunately AIG had no control over Starlink prices and a further update would be provided in response to the councillor enquiry.

The Administrator informed councillors Mrs Charlotte Vye-Brown a senior Scientist at the British Geological Survey would be visiting Ascension next week.

The next Formal AI Council Meeting will be held on 06 June 2024.

The meeting closed at 10:50am

Denise John
Clerk to Council