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PITCAIRN ISLAND COUNCIL
Public Meeting Notes held at the Public Hall
Commencing at 9.00am 9th October 2020

Present:

Mayor Charlene Warren-Peu, Cr Shawn Christian, Cr L Jaques, Cr Lea Brown, Administrator Nick Kennedy and Island Secretary Heather Menzies

Apologies: Cr Michele Christian, Cr Ariel Harding, Deputy Mayor Kevin Young

In attendance: 27 members of the community.

Welcome: The Mayor welcomed the community to the meeting and handed over to the Administrator open discussions.

Agenda Item

The Administrated opened and advised it had come to his attention that the community had questions and concerns about the recent medical evacuation and he wanted to provide an overview of what had taken place.

The MO at the time had identified a need for an emergency medical evacuation and made arrangements for this to take place as is the usual process. This entailed liaison with medical professionals in Tahiti and Helix. And, from the onset, this included transportation, via the Silver Supporter, to Mangareva and an air ambulance to the hospital in Tahiti.

Though there is high level, broad agreement with France and French Polynesia about Pitcairn being able to access the hospitate in Tahiti for emergency medical treatment each case has to be dealt with in detail, on a case by case basis. As such, exemption requests for the ship to enter French Polynesian waters and for the patient and his carer to entre French Polynesia were implemented as per usual channels and HMG was entirely confident both would be approved prior to , or within a short time thereafter, arriving at Mangareva.

However, there occurred an unforeseen series of events which complicated matters.

1. The petrol pump at the Mangareva Airport broke down
2. There were miscommunications between authorities in French Polynesia which resulted in mixed messages being conveyed in Mangareva.
3. Medical professionals (Pitcairn MO and Tahiti Hospital and the Mangareva Clinic doctor) agreed that the Pitcairn patient was sufficiently stabilised not longer require an Air Ambulance and that should travel to tahiti on the next available commercial flight
4. Prior to that decision the patient and his carer had not been booked to travel on the commerical flight of (15th Sept)
5. Another emergency medical evacuation in French Polynesia was given priority.
6. The patient and carer were consequently accommodated in Mangareva and seats were booked for them to travel to Tahiti the following week (22nd Sept)

The Administrator advised this was a particularly unusual set of circumstances and reassured the community HMG will continue to do all it can to ensure safe and expedient travel and clearances are in place for emergenece medical requirements

Questions and Comments from the Gallery

It was noted that, given the series of events, HMG was lucky that the patient did not die.

The Administrator reiterated that all decisions relating to the patient's treatment and care were made on a medical basis by medical professionals. This was further endorsed by the current MO Dr Jack Dascula

The Administrator said he takes responsibility for not providing the community with an update and explanation about what had happened earlier. In hindsight this would have been better done sooner.

It was noted from the gallery that there are implications if French Polynesian medical staff are going to make decisions as to whether a Pitcairn patient requires emergency Air Ambulance medical transportation or not. If a death were to occur, because of such a decision, who would be responsible?

The Medical Officer advised that in this instance all relevant medical staff, both Pitcairn and in FP were in communication and collaborated on patient care, is always the case.

The isolation and the distance between Pitcairn, Mangareva and Tahiti means we have to rely, to some extent on medical expertise in both Mangareva and Tahiti.

Medical Evacuation planning entails always erring on the side of caution and safety, Given the circumstances both Mangareva and Tahiti medical professional cooperated given the specific circumstances.

From the Gallery it was noted the Captain of the Silver Supporter had concerns about clearance and that it took 4 days to get clearance for it to enter French Polynesia Why did this take so long.

The Administrator advised that the high-level clearance for the ship had been granted but there were miscommunications within and from French Polynesian authorities which were also communicated (or not communicated) to the ship.

HMG was confident that all necessary clearances for the Ship, the patient and carer would be granted however. Due to COVID-19 management protocols neither the ship's crew or the accompanying Medical Officer were permitted to land at Mangareva and the Doctor, from Mangareva, was not permitted to board this ship

1) How do we get people emergency med-evacced to French Polynesia back to Pitcairn?

The Administrator advised that Council, HMG, PHE and Dr Dascula have been exploring self isolation requirements for passengers travelling from NZ and Tahiti before returning to Pitcairn.

- From NZ, if COVID-19 risk is low, the options are either:
 - 1) 14 days self-isolation and 2 tests OR (day 3 and day 12)
 - 2) 7 days self-isolation and 1 test (day 3)

It was noted the current protocol is 14 days self-isolation and 2 tests (day 3 and day 12). Public Health England recommended that 7 days self isolation and 1 test would be sufficient. The MO said, in his opinion, it is better to err on the side of caution and his recommendation is for 14 days self-isolation and 2 tests OR (day 3 and day 12)

There ensued general discussion as to the preferred option and why.

It was noted testing that in NZ, testing did not take place on site when people were in isolation as Council had requested. However door to door testing is not an option in Taurangi and social distancing and masking enabled this to occur with ease.

A show of hands 18 hands indicated a preference for option 1) i.e 14 days and 2 for Preference for Option 2) 7 days self-isolation and 1 test (day 3) was shown by 2 hands

The remaining 7 of those present did not show support for either option

The Mayor advised the community they could get further feedback on the matter to her by Sunday 11th 2020.

The recommendations will be discussed at the next regular Council Meeting and once approved will go as a recommendation to the Governor before the final decision is included in the quarterly COVID-19 Management Protocols revision

The Administrator advised that HMG / Council were working with France and French Polynesia on getting patients, who have had to go to Tahiti for emergency treatment, out of French Polynesia on the Silver Supporter, direct from Papeete.

Given this Council, HMG, PHE and Dr Dascula have been exploring self isolation requirements for passengers travelling from Tahiti before returning to Pitcairn – recommending 14 days self-isolation and 2 tests OR (day 3 and day 12)

When asked, those present stated no objection to the above recommendation.

It was additionally recommended that if the Silver Supporter enters French Polynesia to pick up passengers the following protocols will apply

- Passengers will wear masks to board the ship and wear masks on board throughout the voyage when with others.
- Passengers will adhere to social distancing whilst on board
- Passengers will remain on board for 7 days before landing at Pitcairn
- Passengers may optionally choose to self isolate, for a further 7 days once landed, if they so wish, but this is not mandatory.

The Administrator advised the next steps will entail consultation with the Governor and gaining agreement from French Polynesia / France. He and the Mayor will keep the community informed of developments.

There ensued general discussion about other potential options, however, it was noted NZ is not currently issuing transit visas, which makes access Pitcairn via NZ problematic.

It was agreed the most practical option is to get them back on the Silver Supporter via Tahiti.

The Mayor advised people are welcome to provide her with further feedback on the matter by Sunday 11th 2020.

There ensued further discussion about possible options and it was agreed ex Tahiti, on the Silver Supporter, is the best option. It was noted Council has done all it can to progress these plans and it is now up to HMG take things further.

1) What currently happens if there is a need for a patient to access emergency medical treatment in Tahiti, regardless of what passport they hold?

What is the current agreement with French Polynesia? The agreement is high level and each application must be dealt with in detail on a case by case basis.

Who is responsible for applying for exemptions for emergency medical evacuation patients to access to FP for emergency treatment? HMG

How long does the application process take? Over arching agreement is fairly quick but decisions may take time to filter down to the necessary authorities.

2) What currently happens if there is a need for a NZ passport holder to go to NZ for routine medical treatment?

The Medical officer makes arrangements via Helix in the usual manner. NZ passport holders do not need an exemption to enter NZ.

3) What currently happens if there is a need for non-NZ passported holder to go to NZ for routine medical treatment?

The Administrator advised medical treatment will be available one way or another. It is a priority.

What does 'applying for exemption to enter NZ' mean?

It means you have to apply for special permission to enter NZ based on specific criteria

What types of exemptions can non NZ passport holders apply for to get into NZ for routine medical treatment?

HMG has been told that those requirement exemptions for medical reasons should apply under humanitarian reasons.

Who is responsible for applying for non NZ passport holders' exemptions to get into NZ for routine medical treatment? Who will provide advice?

The Patient primarily responsible for applying for an exemption. They can do this with support from the Administrator

How long does it take to get exemption requests processed?

Takes time to get through the NZ process

Seeking Solutions

- The Administrator advised HMG is working on gaining blanket exemptions for all non-NZ passport holders to enter NZ for routine medical treatment.
- HMG is seeking permission to get Pitcairners out of FP, via the Silver Supporter sailing directly to Papeete, if they have had to go there for emergency medical treatment.
- HMG is exploring gaining access to Tahiti for non emergency / routine medical treatment.

What are the timescales? The above actions are underway.

4) Managing wellness on Pitcairn and following MO's recommendations for off-island treatment.

The MO said the world has not seen a pandemic of this magnitude for many many years. The new normal will for some time entail, social distancing and wearing masks etc.

He said we all need to be come more proactive in maintaining good health – we have to use the medical system on island to improve that primary health care. This is the best guarantee to staying well even though emergency medi evacs may well occur.

We can do a lot to improve self management across all age groups on Pitcairn, focusing on whole foods rather than processed foods and beverages and the islands capacity to produce these. It was noted that we need to help create base lines for our individual and collective wellness so MO can re record and track this overtime.

He advised that 1 day a week at the clinic can be committed to check-ups and the Mayor encouraged all those present to take up this options.

5) Update on Renewable Energy Project

Cr L Jaques updated the community on the project. Good Morning everyone. Just wanted to provide a quick update on the Renewable Energy Project funded by the European Union.

The original specs for the project was for a design/build/install and train but with the intervention of covid-19 and the need to press on we have separated the project into two with the design stage to bring solar energy to Pitcairn now underway.

The design project is well underway. It was awarded to a Korean company One Energy Island and we have been working with them for over a month. They are good to work with and have successfully undertaken several projects in the Pacific. We are working with them and SPC who manage Pacific projects on behalf of the EU. Pitcairn was involved in the selection process.

Our own team brings together expertise from across the community. We have Jay, Darcy, Shawn, Kerry, Kevin and me and we are meeting regularly as a group and with teleconference with Suva, Noumea and South Korea Pitcairn.

The responsibility of the project is to ensure every home and government building has a solar power connection either from the grid to the household or as a stand-alone unit.

We are reaching the final stages of planning and should have a first draft proposal for consideration by mid-October. Once the recommendations have been approved by Council, we hope to have the final plans going out to tender for the second and subsequent phases build/install and train by early November with delivery hopefully by mid-2021.

Things are progressing well, and we shall keep everyone informed of developments.

General Business

- 1) The Mayor reminded the community to be mindful of using inappropriate language around children. Ask everyone to think before they speak when children are present or close.
- 2) DM operations advised those that may need water or water cartage to let the him know and this will be taken care of before the heavy equipment is used for roading etc. The Administrator advised that the Operations Division is bearing in mind how much water is available on island before undertaking the proposed road works
- 3) The Travel Co-ordinator advised the Community that she will be calling for inventory for the on-line gallery in the coming week

Meeting Closed: 10.35am

Mayor Charlene Warren-Peu: *Warren*

Date: *13* / *10* / *2020*

