A Special Meeting of the Ramsey Town Commissioners was held in Town Hall, Parliament Square, Ramsey, on Wednesday, 10th May, 2017, at 7.00 p.m.


Apologies for absence was received from Mrs. J. Wedgwood and Mr. F. B. R. Williams.

The Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Chief Technical Officer were in attendance.

(2017/18:008) Area Plan for the East

Members discussed the consultation document on the draft Area Plan for the East which had been circulated.

Members expressed concerns regarding the validity of the proposals and agreed to submit a general response highlighting the following:-

- Members felt that the development plan process should simply be undertaken in regard to the Island as a single area, Members commented that similar documents in the UK would cover areas much greater than the Island.
- If sectionalised as an Eastern Plan only the plan should incorporate a section to demonstrate the context of the plan against economic and built development proposals of the other regions.
- Members expressed concern that the plan was predicated on out of date data, having been substantially prepared before the latest census report. Members felt that the last census could have been used to provide more accurate data upon which to develop the plan. Members commented that the population projections upon which the plan was based had been found to be inaccurate following the last census and felt therefore that the extent of development proposed was excessive.
- Members question the capacity of the infrastructure of Douglas to accommodate the level of further expansion proposed, particularly with respect to transport links.
- Members commented that the plan appears to provide the opportunity for much wider out of town retail development despite Tynwald policy against such. Members also noted that the plan appears to provide wider development opportunity for business and commercial use when there are increasing volumes of unoccupied office space within Douglas Town Centre and other areas, including the Canada Life Buildings in Castletown, Clinches Building, Royal Bank of Scotland Building (and the Villier’s Site), soon to be vacated Zurich Buildings in Athol Street.
(2017/18:008) Area Plan for the East Continued:

- Members expressed the view that further out of town development was decentralising town centres and removing customers from the town retail areas which would have a negative impact on town centre economies, and felt that planning policy and schemes should promote use of existing town centre sites before permitting further out of town development. If this policy was allowed to proceed, it is likely that Douglas in particular would suffer the fate of many similar UK town centres and run the risk of becoming a desolate high street populated with bookmakers and charity shops.

In relation to specific questions raised within the consultation Members:

- felt that the policies should reflect reduced population levels and the need to ensure that development was contained within the boundaries of existing town centres without further expansion unless supported by population growth and demand for further commercial space justified by a high level of occupancy of existing areas and demonstrable demand for further development over and above that able to be met by available existing provision.
- did not feel that higher density of development should be permitted as it would be out of keeping with the character of the Island.
- were of the view that the present First Time Buyer provision did not work and that there was a need to review the general policy of support before seeking to amend planning policy in regard to affordable housing.
- were adamant that further development should not be permitted within identified flood plain areas, this includes the Lake Road area of Douglas which now seems to have been re-designated as the Riverside Gateway.
- were strongly in favour of emphasis being placed upon development of sustainable and low energy housing and property.

Resolved: the Town Clerk respond to the consultation to reflect the Board’s views.

(2017/18:009) Town Map

The Deputy Town Clerk circulated a substantive draft of a new town map intended to be displayed at the main arrival points to the town, the MER Station, Bus Station, Coach Parking Market Place, etc. The labelling of Sulby River was raised as was the review of the map by the IOM RNIB to ensure that it was suitable for persons with limited vision.

Members were asked to provide any feedback to the Deputy Town Clerk.

Resolved: the map to be produced subject to any further amendment notified by Members.
(2017/18:010) Social Media

The Chairman drew Members attention to recent public exchanges between Members on social media platforms which it was felt did not present the Members of the Commission in a good light and provided no merit or value to the Board.

Resolved: to note the negative impact of improper use of social media and that social media representation should be supportive and collective.

(2017/18:011) Ramsey Carnival

Mr Oldham advised that plans to reintroduce the Ramsey Carnival in 2017 were well advanced despite an allegation that a member of the public had advised some parties that the carnival was not going ahead. Mr Oldham confirmed that the carnival would be proceeding and that entry forms and posters were expected to be issued within the next two weeks.

Resolved: to note good progress with the carnival plans through the community carnival committee.

(2017/18:012) Social Media Training

The Deputy Town Clerk reported on further discussions with an IOM based media trainer in regard to the use of social media for political members and senior officers. Members noted that the training would provide a wider understanding of social media platforms, their use and pitfalls and would provide the opportunity to develop guidelines for use by Members and Staff to ensure that the maximum benefit was derived therefrom.

Resolved: Proposed by Mr McGuinness seconded by Mrs Quayle and agreed unanimously to appoint local provider “Chips Cheese and Gravy” to provide training for Members and selected officers at a cost of £1,200.00.

(2017/18:013) Lezayre Road

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Department of Infrastructure had postponed the planned reconstruction of Lezayre Road until after the 2018 TT races.

Resolved: to note the postponement of the Lezayre Road Scheme, a formal announcement would be made in the next week.

The decision notification was embargoed until a public announcement had been made by the Department.
(2017/18:014) Initiatives to Encourage Cycling

The Town Clerk advised of an invitation for two representatives to attend a presentation on the promotion of cycling within communities.

Resolved: the Deputy Chairman Mr Parker and the Town Clerk to attend the presentation.

(2017/18:015) Ramsey AFC Dinner

Mr Hankin reported on his attendance at the recent annual prize giving for Ramsey Association Football Club thanking the Club for their hospitality and congratulating them on the further development of the sport in the north of the Island.

The meeting ended at 8:20 p.m. giving a time for computation of payment of attendance allowances of 1 ½ hours.

Chairman.