



RAMSEY TOWN COMMISSIONERS

STATEMENT ON TOWN RATES FOR 2010/2011

INTRODUCTION

Along with Central Government, and other local authorities, the Ramsey Town Commission has had to consider very carefully its budgets and services in order to meet the challenges facing the Island since the changes in the UK VAT agreement.

In preparing its 2010/11 estimates the Commission has sought to absorb the impact of inflationary increases for the forthcoming year whilst retaining funding for priority works. A conscious decision has been taken to reduce reserve balances retained for cash flow with a credit balance of £697,432.00 (104.73p) anticipated for the year ending 31st March 2010, and a reduced credit balance of £478,101.00 (71.79p) estimated at 31st March 2011 to meet the demands of cash flow in the subsequent rate year; this will require the Commission to apply greater rigor in the management of expenditure during the first quarter of the new rate year.

The reduction of the central government support for refuse disposal charges from 90% to 71% with effect from 1st April 2010 will result in an increase in the annual disposal costs to be met from the rate fund of £60,420.00 (9.07p in the £). In addition the rate includes a contribution of £84,715 (£75,700.00 in 2009/2010), equivalent to a rate of 12.72p in the £, towards the operating costs of the northern civic amenity site at Ballacallow, this amount is paid to the Department of Local Government and the Environment. The overall impact of the revised refuse disposal costs is equivalent to a 10.42p in the £ rate increase.

The total net rateable value utilised in fixing the Town Rate for 2010/2011 is £665,915; a decrease of £3,498 (-.52%) on the previous year. Provision for rates discounts, for payment on or before 30th June, 2010, of 5% of rates paid by that date, has been provided for in the sum of £76,350.00 (11.46p). The average loan charge interest applied in preparing the 2010/2011 estimates remains at 5.5%; a figure of 1.75% has been used to allow for

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inflation during the new financial year, except for energy prices for which a 20% assumption has been made.

TOWN AND VILLAGE REGENERATION SCHEME

Over the past year considerable improvement has been seen in the appearance of a number of local properties due in no small part to the efforts of the local group Faith in Action. In addition the works to bring land at the corner of East Street and Parliament Street into public use, through the support of the Regeneration Fund, and with the generous agreement of the landowner, has been very well received.

The Commission is working closely with members of the Ramsey Local Regeneration Committee, the Members of the House of Keys for Ramsey and the Ramsey Chamber of Commerce, to progress the development of a bid for funding for regeneration initiatives within the Ramsey Town Centre. Local firm Dalrymple Associates has been appointed to lead a public consultation exercise, presently underway, that will result in the production of a draft design brief which will be used to develop a case for upgrading the streetscape and investment within Ramsey Town Centre.

BRITAIN IN BLOOM 2009

In 2008 Ramsey was successful in achieving the overall First Prize in the Isle of Man Island in Bloom Competition, organised by the Department of Tourism and Leisure. The Commission went on to represent the Island in the Britain in Bloom Finals 2009 and was successful in gaining the highest award achieved by an Island entry of Silver Gilt. The Commission commends all of those who made this success possible.

The 2009 Island in Bloom competition was won by Douglas who will represent the Island in the Britain in Bloom Finals 2010.

SWIMMING POOL CONTRIBUTION

A sum of £18,500.00 has been included in the estimates as the Commission's contribution towards the cost of Northern Swimming Pool, which is administered by the Northern Local Authorities Swimming Pool Board. This amount equates approximately to the product of a 2.5p rate.

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The site of the “old” pool, previously provided by the Commission, was returned to the Commission in July 2009. Following a period of notice and consideration of a number of expressions of interest the Commission has

offered a lease option to Buffalo Bowling and Leisure who propose converting the premises to a ten-pin bowling and leisure facility for which planning consent for change of use was been submitted in February 2010.

CAR PARKING IN THE TOWN

The Commission concluded an outline business plan into the provision of off-street parking for Ramsey early in 2003. The Department of Transport has appointed consultants Burroughs Stewart to review the business case for a multi-storey car park and to take this matter forward.

Investigation is ongoing into settlement occurring at the entrance to the Station Road Car Park against which provision is made in 2010/2011 of up to £50,875.00 (7.64p) for improvements to the entrance and exit abutting Station Road. The works are projected to take place this year and as a consequence there will be a period of disruption during which car park access and egress will be restricted to the entrance off Bircham Avenue.

TOWN HALL AND OTHER PROPERTY

The Town Hall and Library continues to show improvement in terms of service provision and facilities and is regularly used by many organisations for events, presentations and training courses and it continues to be a highly practical and popular venue within the Town. The Ramsey Civil Registry, the Coroner for the Sheadings of Ayre and Garff, Northern Neighbours and Age Concern are located in the Town Hall. The Commission recognises the opportunity to broaden the range of services able to be deliver locally to the community of Ramsey and the north and early discussions have taken place into the potential for other Government bodies to be located in, and provide services from, the building

The Age Concern Computer Drop-In Centre continues to operate in the first floor library; in addition Age Concern is operating a lifetime learning centre to provide one to one computer tuition to new or inexperienced users to enable them to benefit from internet services and to communicate electronically with distant relatives and friends. The Commission is pleased to work in partnership with Age Concern to provide an opportunity for many townspeople to access internet services and contribute towards the

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bridging of the “digital divide”. The library is also serviced by a wireless internet “hot-spot” enabling users with wireless enabled laptops to access the internet within the library area.

Library opening hours are to be reviewed to accommodate a reduction in staffing upon the impending retirement of a current part-time staff member. The Commission will also be undertaking a fundamental review of the services provided through the public library in order to ascertain the best means of ensuring that those services are relevant and proportionate to the needs of the community and delivered in a fashion which provides value for money.

The Members of the House of Keys for Ramsey continue to hold a monthly political surgery in the Town Hall on the second Saturday of each month. The Commission will continue to encourage functions and displays with a view to maximising use of the Town Hall facilities.

LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING

The cost of public sector housing provision continues to be met by Government through the provision of 100% housing deficiency grant payments. For the rate year 2010/2011 the projected deficit on the Commissions housing, based on the capital programme in place at the time of rate setting, is £1,762,166.83 [£627,808.00 in 2009/10], equivalent to £3,395.31 per house for the year or £65.29 per house per week for each of the 519 tenanted properties in Ramsey at 31st January 2010.

The Department of Local Government and the Environment has yet to advise on the public sector rent increase for 2010/2011. For the purpose of rate setting an assumption has been made that rents will increase by 5% and that the Maintenance Allowance will remain at 33.33% of rents receivable with Administration Allowance at 7.5% of rent receivable.

Current waiting lists for accommodation in Ramsey, as at 1st February 2010, show a total of 152 (150 at the same date in 2009) applicants in varying need of first tenancies. There are 46 (55 in the previous year) tenants who are seeking transfers to alternative accommodation with the reduction having been facilitated by the progress in redeveloping Lezayre Estate and the new Yew Tree Apartments. During the period 1st January, 2009 to 31st December, 2009 there were 29 (18 in the previous year) properties let to new tenants from the waiting lists (including 1 supported tenancy) and 50 transfers of tenants to alternative properties (59 in the previous year). There were also 2 inter-authority transfers.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT & REFURBISHMENTS

The development of new housing to replace the Lezayre Estate is progressing well. The Commission has received all of the 72 new homes in the first and second phase of redevelopment, these are already occupied. The contract for the third and fourth phase of redevelopment is progressing well with the first of those houses expected to be occupied in June 2010. The contract for the final phase of redevelopment is expected to be signed early in the new rate year with construction commencing in June 2010 and the scheme being completed in September 2011.

The final phase of the gas-fired central heating installation programme being undertaken within the IOM Government framework agreement, including work at Lower Queens Pier Road, Princes Road, Albert Terrace, Westbourne Road and Gladstone Avenue is ongoing at a cost of £261,736.00. These works complete the programme of installations as a result of which all the Commissions housing stock will be served by modern efficient central heating systems.

The planned refurbishment of properties at Brookhill Road and Seamount Road is proceeding following the appointment of Dalrymple Associates as project managers. Planning consent has been obtained and tenders have been received for the scheme which will include internal and external refurbishment. The contract works will commence on programme in June 2010 at an overall cost of £1.1 million.

During 2009/10 the Commission undertook the demolition of four properties at Mayfield, Queens Pier Road. The remaining properties on this small estate are presently being assessed for redevelopment in partnership with the Department of Local Government and the Environment and the Ramsey and the Northern Districts Housing Committee within a wider development programme encompassing Mayfield and the former Albert Road School site. These schemes are identified within the Isle of Man Budget 2010/11.

Ongoing expenditure of over £33 million is included over the next five years, the revenue implications of which, estimated at approximately £2.5 million per annum, are funded by the Department of Local Government and the Environment under the Housing Deficiency arrangements approved by Tynwald.

The capital programme for housing works in Ramsey up to 2015, contained within the Isle of Man Budget is shown in the following table:-

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	Total est. cost £000's	Probable to 31.3.10 £000's	2010- 11 £000' s	2011- 12 £000' s	2012- 13 £000' s	2013- 14 £000' s	2014- 15 £000' s	Annual Costs £000's
RAMSEY								
Planned Maintenance	5,530	1,160	1,683	675	500	707	805	541
Clifton Park Elderly Housing	3,000			50	300	1,000	1,650	211
Lezayre Estate Redevelopment								
Phase 1 Redevelopment	7,429	7,429						523
Phase 2 Redevelopment	4,479	4,403	76					315
Phase 3/4 Redevelopment	6,362	2,954	3,296	112				447
Phase 5 Redevelopment	4,489	284	3,127	1,002	76			316
Mayfield Flats Replacement	2,300		125	100	1,100	900	75	225
TOTAL	33,589	16,230	8,307	1,939	1,976	2,607	2,530	2,578

Planned maintenance works apart from the refurbishment of Seamount and Brookhill properties, include fascia and gutter schemes to various estates and kitchen and bathroom replacement schemes presently being developed in conjunction with the Department of Local Government and the Environment as framework agreements. The Commission has also recently completed a major stock condition survey with a view to developing a 10 year forward maintenance programme for its total housing stock.

REFUSE COLLECTION

The Commission continues to operate a commercial charging system for refuse based on the PM Onboard Weighing System with commercial customers being invoiced for the full disposal cost of business waste collected by the Commission, an average around 600 tonnes per annum.

Ramsey produces on average around 3060 tonnes of domestic refuse each year, and budgetary provision is made to meet disposal costs for 3180 tonnes, providing a small capacity for growth in arisings or property numbers. Domestic refuse disposal charges imposed by the Department of Local Government and the Environment have been increased from £10.00 per tonne to £29 per tonne resulting in a projected charge of £92,220.00 for the 2010/11 year.

It is not proposed to introduce weight based charging of households at this time, as the additional costs of administering such a system are not justified for charges that would average about £20.00 per household per annum. For this reason domestic disposal charges continue to be a rate borne expense.

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The Commission is presently undertaking a review of refuse collection services and will be introducing changes to the collection days in some areas of the town in order to improve the efficiency and safety of the service. The Commission is making preparation for the possible introduction of a kerbside recycling scheme, following Government review of the Eastern Authorities scheme, and will be entering into early dialogue with Government with a view to the successful implementation of the scheme in the north of the island if progressed.

A proposal to replace one of the Commission's refuse collection vehicles has been deferred, initially for one year, to allow the impact of changes to the waste collection service to be assessed, and in anticipation of proposals to provide a new civic amenity site on land at Balladoole Farm which may impact upon the service presently provide in Ramsey. In deferring the replacement provision has been made to provide for extraordinary expenditure which may result from the increased age of the vehicle fleet.

SEWERAGE SCHEMES

The Commission acts as agent for the Department of Transport in the maintenance of the Town's sewerage systems, the costs of which are met by the Department of Transport and not borne by the rate fund.

An Environmental Scoping Assessment has been carried out by Consultants AECOM from Belfast, on behalf of the Department of Transport, in respect of the location of a proposed Wastewater Treatment Works development on land at Balladoole Farm to the north of Ramsey. This report will form part of the supporting documentation for a future planning application in respect of the proposed Wastewater Treatment Works which will otherwise be known as the Northern Regional Treatment Works for IRIS. Whilst full details have not yet been released it is envisaged that the provision of the new Treatment Works will replace the existing Vollan Pumping Station in its present operation, thereby eliminating the discharges of raw sewage into Ramsey bay as part of an overall strategy by Isle of Man Government.

Works have been carried out to several of the pumping Stations within the Town, with upgrading works having been progressed including the provision of new electrical cabinets which will ultimately house the telemetry systems providing vital information regarding the status of the pumping stations to the Commission's Works staff and to Meary Veg

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where all drainage information is gathered on an Island wide basis. Works will progress in 2010/2011 to upgrade further pumping stations throughout the Town as required.

Further sewer closed-circuit TV surveys have been carried out on category A critical sewers within the Town, predominantly in areas where sewers are located under strategically important roads including Waterloo Road and Lezayre Road. In total, almost 9 kilometres of sewer lines have been CCTV surveyed which will form the basis for future upgrading work packages. In addition, a number of manhole covers have been replaced on the critical sewers and intensive cleaning has been carried out.

It has previously been recognised that the present method of surface water disposal within Coil Breryk is inadequate and results in flooding of the road, pavement and also to garden areas to several houses. The Department of Transport Drainage Division has appointed Consultants to carry out a Design and Tender Process for the preferred option to alleviate the problem and it is programmed that works will be commencing in September 2010 following the appointment of a Contractor.

DECORATIVE AND STREET LIGHTING

The Manx Electricity Authority has not identified any major undergrounding schemes during the 2010/2011 year and this will allow for future upgrading schemes to be identified and included for promotion in the following years. Maintenance of the existing street lighting infrastructure within the Town is ongoing and improvements are being identified to reduce the running costs of the system. Provision is made to replace as necessary a proportion of the displays which are mounted on the street lighting columns throughout the town centre, this work is carried out as a rolling programme each year.

MOORAGH PARK

A scheme to renew surface water drainage through the Mooragh Park has commenced and is scheduled for completion in March 2010.

The Commission has received approval to meet the cost of the scheme by way of capital borrowing; however during the preparation of budgets it became apparent that cost saving initiatives had been successful, allowing the decision to be taken to fund the works from revenue funds during the 2009/10 financial year at a cost of £132,950.00. By revenue funding this item the Commission has avoided a future annual charge of approximately

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£9,914.00 per annum, equivalent to a 1.48p rate over a period of 15 years. On completion of the works the Commission intends proceeding with a major capital scheme to resurface the Mooragh Park driveway which is deteriorating significantly and is considered to be beyond economic repair and below modern standards.

A specific sum of £10,000 is again provided towards improvements to the woodland pathways running through the Brooghs for a second year. Works are already well underway using the Commissions direct labour workforce to carry out pathway improvements from Grove Mount down to the Mooragh Park. These pathways are popular with walkers; for whose use they are provided. They are not for the use of cyclists; the Town Warden will be paying attention to the pathways to ensure that they are not damaged by cyclists.

PLAY AREAS

The Commission undertakes weekly inspections of all play areas and play equipment. An annual inspection by independent specialists is also undertaken to ensure that equipment remains compliant with appropriate safety standards and fit for use. The play areas continue to be well used and the ongoing investment in maintenance and upgrading ensures that they are amongst the best available on the Island.

During 2009/10 provision was made for the introduction of adult exercise equipment within the Mooragh Park at a cost of £30,000.00, the installation of the equipment will be completed for Easter 2010.

MISCELLANEOUS FEES AND CHARGES

Membership fees for the Town Library for 2010/2011 will remain at £10 for adult residents of Ramsey, £20.00 for non-residents and £1.00 for students and children. Bowling Club fees for 2010/2011 have been fixed at £46.00 for adults, £26.00 for juniors and £32.00 for senior citizens.

Car parking charges for reserved spaces at Chapel Lane, College Street and Water Street remain at £295.00 plus VAT per annum; a small increase is being applied to Search Fees in respect of property sales, these increase to £90.00 whilst Letters of Comfort remain charged at £27.00. Hire charges for the Town Hall Boardroom have also been retained at £65.00 plus VAT per session for corporate hire and weddings, and £25.00 plus VAT per session for local or charitable events.

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STAFFING AND ADMINISTRATION

The Commission has an establishment of 51 persons in both full and part-time positions being the equivalent of 47.61 full time employees. There are presently 5 staff vacancies, equivalent to 4.14 full time employees and a decision has already been taken to reduce the establishment by 1 further employee following forthcoming retirement. The Commission will be reviewing any posts released through resignation or retirement of existing staff with a view to absorbing duties within existing staff resources where possible.

All vacancies will be carefully considered, where it is not possible to absorb staff losses consideration will be given to acceptable reductions in service level where possible and practicable, before posts are advertised for reappointment.

The Commission is finalising the introduction of new systems for housing management, rent collection and administration designed to improve efficiency, communication and business continuity contingencies. The systems will be operable on 1st April 2010 and following implementation will enable the Commission to consider further staffing efficiencies alongside the improvement of services.

Staffing establishment at 1st February 2010	NJC		Whitley Council		Total	
	No.	Full Time Equivalent	No.	Full Time Equivalent	No.	Full Time Equivalent
Town Clerks Office	3	3.00			3	3.00
Technical Services Department	3	3.00			3	3.00
Finance & Administration	6	5.68			6	5.68
Housing	3	2.18			3	2.18
Library	5	3.07			5	3.07
Town Hall			1	1	1	1.00
Parks & Gardens			6	6	6	6.00
Works			9	9	9	9.00
Refuse			4	4	4	4.00
Housing			11	10.68	11	10.68
TOTALS	20	16.93	31	30.68	51	47.61

The Commission notes the freeze on public sector pay awards announced within the Isle of Man Budget 2010/11. Provision is made for superannuation contributions to be retained at 23%.

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Having regard to the aforementioned, especially the impact of the increase in refuse disposal charges, the Commission has regrettably been obliged to apply a net rate increase of 8p in the £ for the 2010/11 rate year, the **Ramsey Town Rate for 2010/2011 has been therefore been fixed at 332p** in the pound, an increase of approximately 2.5% over the 2009/2010 rate.

A summary of the net estimated cost of the main services and facilities provided by the Ramsey Town Commission is attached to this Report.

February, 2010.

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RAMSEY TOWN COMMISSIONERS

The net estimated costs of the rates funded main services to be administered by the Commission during 2010/2011 are as follows:-

	Net Rateable Value	£ 669,413		£ 665,915	= decrease	-0.52%
	2009/10		Rate Poundage	2010/11	Rate Poundage	Increase/ decrease
Works and Development						
Refuse Removal & Disposal	£	356,129	55.43	£ 392,895	59.00	3.57
Contribution - Northern Civic Amentity Site Operating Costs	£	75,700	10.48	£ 84,715	12.72	2.24
Car Parks	£	64,271	0.77	£ 62,484	9.38	8.61
Street & Decorative Lighting	£	89,225	13.98	£ 97,025	14.57	0.59
Amenities, Services, Miscellaneous Maintenance and Administration	-£	20,990	-5.08	-£ 16,182	-2.43	2.65
		<u>£ 564,335</u>		<u>£ 620,937</u>		
Parks & Leisure						
Events and Attractions	£	48,175	6.92	£ 42,720	6.42	-0.50
Parks and Gardens Maintenance and Redevelopment	£	317,372	45.73	£ 346,905	52.09	6.36
Swimming Pool	£	17,125	2.73	£ 18,500	2.78	0.05
Library	£	134,925	19.76	£ 137,525	20.65	0.90
Other Amenities	£	29,175	1.77	£ 13,977	2.10	0.33
		<u>£ 546,772</u>		<u>£ 559,627</u>		
Housing & Property						
Town Hall incl. Loan Charges	£	236,875	35.90	£ 238,065	35.75	-0.15
Miscellaneous Property and Health and Safety at Work	£	23,385	9.85	£ 24,380	3.66	-6.19
		<u>£ 260,260</u>		<u>£ 262,445</u>		
Finance, General Purposes and Establishment						
Administration	£	119,675	18.70	£ 131,650	19.77	1.07
Office Expenses	£	110,275	15.50	£ 76,775	11.53	-3.97
Salaries and National Insurance	£	541,650	73.32	£ 515,000	77.34	4.02
Superannuation	£	121,850	17.96	£ 126,000	18.92	0.96
Miscellaneous Income/Expenditure and Loan Charges	£	42,465	2.13	£ 49,725	7.47	5.34
		<u>£ 935,915</u>		<u>£ 899,150</u>		
		<u>£ 2,307,282</u>	344.67	<u>£ 2,342,159</u>	351.72	
Less						
Credit Balance at 31st March, brought forward		-£ 954,674	-142.61	-£ 697,432	-104.73	
Add						
Arrears and Allowances for Exempt Properties		£ 63,000	9.41	£ 88,000	13.21	
Add						
Credit Balance Estimate at year end		<u>£ 753,290</u>	112.53	<u>£ 478,101</u>	71.80	
Rateable Income		<u><u>£ 2,168,898</u></u>	324.00	<u><u>£ 2,210,828</u></u>	332.00	
			Rate		Rate	
			324p in £		332p in £	