



RAMSEY TOWN COMMISSIONERS

STATEMENT ON TOWN RATES FOR 2011/2012

INTRODUCTION

In common 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 2011/12 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 £884,684 (132.36p) anticipated for the year ending 31st March 2011, and a reduced credit balance of £653,940.00 (97.849p) estimated at 31st March 2012 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 total net rateable value utilised in fixing the Town Rate for 2011/2012 is £668,410; an increase of £2,495 (.37%) on the previous year. Provision for rates discounts, for payment on or before 30th June, 2011, of 5% of rates paid by that date, has been provided for in the sum of £80,000.00 (11.96p). The Commission continues to believe that the discount should be discontinued and that interest should be charged in respect of late payments.

The average loan charge interest applied in preparing the 2011/2012 estimates remains at 5.5%; a figure of 6.00% has been used to allow for inflation during the new financial year, except for energy prices for which a 10% assumption has been made.

TOWN AND VILLAGE REGENERATION SCHEME

The Commission continues to work 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.

Following consultations planning applications have been submitted for the first

phase of works, that being improvement to the lanes leading between Parliament Street and the Quayside. The proposals include new natural surfacing, low energy LED lighting and provision for “hidden art”. In addition the Commission has made a provision equivalent to a 2.5p rate towards rate funded initiatives in respect of the regeneration of the town centre.

In conjunction with the regeneration initiative the Commission will be targeting the condition of private property within the Town, utilising powers vested by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1984 and the Building Control Act 1991). Ongoing action in relation to a property on Mooragh Promenade, has now reached the stage where the Commission is to engage contractors to undertake works necessary to make the property safe. Financial provision of £50,000 (7.48p) is made to specifically address the condition of Bleak House, Mooragh Promenade. Although the Commission will be seeking to recover any costs it is considered prudent to budget for this expense as recovery may not occur in the year of expenditure.

TOWN HALL AND OTHER PROPERTY

The Town Hall and Library continues to show improvement in terms of service provision and facilities. It 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 delivered locally to the community of Ramsey and the north and discussions are continuing 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; 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 bridging of the “digital divide”. The library is also serviced by a wireless internet “hot-spot” enabling users with wireless enabled laptops to obtain free access to the internet within the library area.

During the past year the Commission reviewed its Library opening hours and discontinued late night opening, this change enabled savings to be made in staffing costs, heating and lighting. The Commission intends to undertake a 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 for ratepayers.

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.

The former swimming pool on South Promenade has been leased for 25 years to a newly established company, Buffalo Bowling and Leisure Limited, who are progressing proposals to turn the premises into a ten-pin bowling and leisure centre, for which planning consent has been obtained. Works to convert the property are progressing and the operating company envisages the premises being open for business before Easter 2011. The Commission look forward to the opening of this new venture which will provide a major attraction to the town.

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 2011/2012 the projected deficit on the Commissions housing, based on the capital programme in place at the time of rate setting, is £1,002,450.00 equivalent to £1,829.28 per house for the year or £35.17 per house per week for each of the 548 tenanted properties in Ramsey at 31st January 2011.

The Department of Social Care has advised that the public sector rent increase for 2010/2011 will be 5%, the Maintenance Allowance will reduce to 30.00% of rents receivable with the Administration Allowance remaining at 7.5% of rent receivable.

Current waiting lists for accommodation in Ramsey, as at 1st February 2011, show a total of 134 (152 at the same date in 2010) applicants in varying need of first tenancies. There are 32 (46 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. During the period 1st January, 2010 to 31st December, 2010 there were 26 (29 in the previous year) properties let to new tenants from the waiting lists and 40 transfers of tenants to alternative properties (50 in the previous year). There were also 2 inter-authority transfers.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT & REFURBISHMENTS

The contract for the final phase of redevelopment of the former Lezayre Estate is proceeding well with the scheme on target to be completed in September 2011.

The refurbishment of properties at Brookhill Road and Seamount Road is proceeding, following the acceptance of a tender submitted by NK Joinery Ltd. The scheme is on target for completion later this year.

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

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of Social Care and the Ramsey and the Northern Districts Housing Committee within a wider development programme encompassing Mayfield and the former Albert Road School site.

The Commission has, in partnership with the Department of Social Care, embarked on a scheme to demolish the former Albert Road School; the site will be used as a temporary car park until redevelopment proposals can progress, projected to be within the next 2-3 years.

Ongoing capital expenditure on schemes totalling over £32 million is included in the Isle of Man Budget approved at the February sitting of Tynwald. The revenue implications of which, estimated at approximately £2.5 million per annum, are funded by the Department of Social Care 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:-

	Total Estimated Cost	Probable to 31.3.11	2011- 12	2012- 13	2013- 14	2014- 15	2015- 16	Further Payments
RAMSEY								
Planned Maintenance Programme	4,209	950	1,747	500	107	555	350	
Lezayre Estate Redevelopment								
Phase 1 Redevelopment	7,429	7,300	129					
Phase 2 Redevelopment	4,479	4,479						
Phase 3/4 Redevelopment	6,362	6,250	112					
Phase 5 Redevelopment	4,489	3,411	1,002	76				
Mayfield Flats Replacement								
TOTAL	5,500		50	550	1,500	1,600	1,500	300
	32,468	22,390	3,040	1,126	1,607	2,155	1,850	300

Planned maintenance works apart from the refurbishment of Seamount and Brookhill properties, include fascia and gutter schemes to various estates, due to commence on site in March this year, and kitchen and bathroom replacement schemes presently being developed in conjunction with the Department of Social Care as framework agreements. The Commission has also recently completed the first annual review of its stock condition survey which is used to inform the forward maintenance programme for its total housing stock.

SWIMMING POOL CONTRIBUTION

A sum of £19,610.00 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.

CAR PARKING

Investigation into settlement occurring at the entrance to the Station Road Car Park has identified a major area of unstable ground, approximately 55m² which requires removal and consolidation. A scheme is being prepared which will be

tendered in the current year to provide a permanent solution to the problem. Financial provision of £21,000 (3.14p), representing the loan charges on borrowing over 10 years, has been made to meet the cost of a capital scheme.

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.

The Commission has also targeted a sum of £10,000 (1.5p) to attend to areas of defective tarmac in other car parks within the town.

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 of approximately 600 tonnes per annum.

The average annual domestic waste arising in Ramsey has reduced from 3060 tonnes to around 2800 tonnes per year. Domestic refuse disposal charges imposed by the Department of Infrastructure have increased by 6% from £29.00 per tonne to £30.74 per tonne, however the reduced tonnage has enabled the Commission to avoid any rate increase in respect of domestic refuse disposal charges for 2011/12.

The Commission has completed a review of refuse collection services and has introduced revised collection arrangements. This review has resulted in operational efficiencies which have enabled the Commission to reduce the cost of the domestic refuse service by over £11,000 for the forthcoming year.

A new refuse vehicle is on order to replace a vehicle that it is no longer cost effective to retain in the fleet.

SEWERAGE SCHEMES

The Commission acts as agent for the Isle of Man Water and Sewerage Authority in the maintenance of the Town's sewerage systems, the costs of which are met by the Water and Sewerage Authority and not borne by the rate fund.

An Environmental Scoping Assessment has been carried out by Consultants AECOM from Belfast, on behalf of the, 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, where all drainage information is gathered on an Island wide basis.

DECORATIVE AND STREET LIGHTING

The Manx Electricity Authority has not identified any major undergrounding schemes during the 2011/2012 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, the Commission is presently trialling a new type of LED lighting head which, if successful, will provide an opportunity to achieve reduced running costs on replaced lamps in future years.

MOORAGH PARK

A scheme to renew surface water drainage through the Mooragh Park was completed in March 2010. This was planned to be a capital scheme; but a healthy financial position has allowed this to be funded from revenue. The Commission is progressing proposals for 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. Work is expected to start on site in the current calendar year.

A specific sum of £10,000 is provided for a third year towards improvements to the woodland pathways running through the Brooghs. Previous works have been well received and have greatly improved the area which is widely used by walkers and joggers. Unfortunately some inconsiderate cyclists are causing damage in the area. They are reminded that their actions are an offence under the bye laws and subject to a fine not exceeding £2500.

The Commission has reviewed the use of bedding plants in all planted areas, substituting them with perennial planting has enabled reductions to be made in the cost of maintaining planted areas equivalent to a 4.7p rate.

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.

The introduction of adult exercise equipment within the Mooragh Park at a cost of £30,000.00 was completed during the past year, the equipment has been a resounding success, other local authorities are known to have or to be considering introducing similar equipment; following the lead set by Ramsey.

Provision is made for a scheme to introduce a further recreational area within the Town Centre on land at Tower Street presently used as temporary car parking and owned by the Department of Social Care. The scheme will require planning consent. Options for the facilities to be provided, which may include a youth shelter, planting and seating, will be the subject of consultation. Budgetary provision of £68,000.00 is made, and subject to a borrowing over 10 years the annual costs would be £9,092.16 (1.36p in the £) rate, assuming interest at 6%, with total repayment of £90,921.60 including interest of £22,910.60.

MISCELLANEOUS FEES AND CHARGES

Membership fees for the Town Library for 2011/2012 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 2011/2012 have been fixed at £47.00 for adults, £27.00 for juniors and £33.00 for senior citizens.

Car parking charges for reserved spaces at Chapel Lane, College Street and Water Street are £310.00 plus VAT per annum; a small increase is being applied to Search Fees in respect of property sales, these increase to £95.00. Hire charges for the Town Hall Boardroom have been set at £68.50 plus VAT per session for corporate hire and weddings, and £26.50 plus VAT per session for local or charitable events.

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 6 staff vacancies, equivalent to 5.14 full time employees. The Commission will continue to review any posts released through the resignation or retirement of existing staff with a view to absorbing duties within existing staff resources where possible.

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Staffing establishment at 1st February 2011	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

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

The Commission has introduced new systems for housing management, rent collection and administration designed to improve efficiency. The systems are fully operable and will enable the Commission to consider further staffing efficiencies, alongside the improvement of services.

The Commission notes the freeze on public sector pay awards within the Isle of Man Budget 2011/12, and no allowance is made for pay awards in the estimates. Provision is made for superannuation contributions to be retained at 23%.

Having regard to the aforementioned the **Ramsey Town Rate for 2010/2011 has been retained at 332p** in the pound, no increase over the 2010/2011 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.

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February, 2011.

www.ramsey.gov.im

RAMSEY TOWN COMMISSIONERS

The net estimated costs of the rates funded main services to be administered by the Commission during 2011/2012 are as follows:-

	Net Rateable Value	£ 665,915		£ 668,410	= increase	0.37%
	2009/10		Rate Poundage	2010/11	Rate Poundage	Increase/ decrease
Works and Development						
Refuse Removal & Disposal	£	392,895	59.00	£ 381,005	57.00	-2.00
Contribution - Northern Civic Amenity Site Operating Costs	£	84,715	12.72	£ 86,305	12.91	0.19
Car Parks	£	62,484	9.38	£ 32,603	4.88	-4.51
Street & Decorative Lighting	£	97,025	14.57	£ 104,175	15.59	1.02
Amenities, Services, Miscellaneous Maintenance and Administration	-£	16,182	-2.43	£ 25,940	3.88	6.31
		<u>£ 620,937</u>		<u>£ 630,028</u>		
Parks & Leisure						
Events and Attractions	£	42,720	6.42	£ 40,185	6.01	-0.40
Parks and Gardens Maintenance and Redevelopment	£	346,905	52.09	£ 316,521	47.35	-4.74
Swimming Pool	£	18,500	2.78	£ 19,610	2.93	0.16
Library	£	137,525	20.65	£ 125,935	18.84	-1.81
Other Amenities	£	13,977	2.10	£ 34,192	5.12	3.02
		<u>£ 559,627</u>		<u>£ 536,443</u>		
Housing & Property						
Town Hall incl. Loan Charges	£	238,065	35.75	£ 239,675	35.86	0.11
Miscellaneous Property and Health and Safety at Work	£	24,380	3.66	£ 22,770	3.41	-0.25
		<u>£ 262,445</u>		<u>£ 262,445</u>		
Finance, General Purposes and Establishment						
Administration	£	131,650	19.77	£ 136,590	20.44	0.67
Office Expenses	£	76,775	11.53	£ 80,960	12.11	0.58
Salaries and National Insurance	£	515,000	77.34	£ 495,000	74.06	-3.28
Superannuation	£	126,000	18.92	£ 126,000	18.85	-0.07
Miscellaneous Income/Expenditure and Loan Charges	£	49,725	7.47	£ 87,489	13.09	5.62
		<u>£ 899,150</u>		<u>£ 926,039</u>		
		<u>£ 2,342,159</u>	351.72	<u>£ 2,354,955</u>	352.32	
Less						
Credit Balance at 31st March, brought forward		-£ 697,432	-104.73	-£ 884,684	-132.36	
Add						
Arrears and Allowances for Exempt Properties		£ 88,000	13.21	£ 92,500	13.84	
Add						
Credit Balance Estimate at year end		<u>£ 478,101</u>	71.80	<u>£ 653,940</u>	97.84	
Rateable Income		<u><u>£ 2,210,828</u></u>	332.00	<u><u>£ 2,216,711</u></u>	331.64	
			Rate		Rate	
			332p in £		332p in £	