

**RAMSEY TOWN COMMISSIONERS
TOWN CLERK'S REPORT
MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC
LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERSHIP
INFORMATION REPORT**

Mr. Chairman and Members,

This report is an updated version of an earlier reported debated by the Board at its meeting in March 2018. The information regarding authority memberships has been updated to reflect the present position. The report is provided as background information in regard to the matter for which a request to discuss has been received from a member of the public in accordance with Standing Order 13(i), *“There is much talk of streamlining local authorities. Has the board considered following others by reducing the number of members?”*

Ramsey Town Commissioners were constituted as a local authority under the Ramsey Town Act 1865, Section 3 thereof providing that seven Commissioners shall be elected who shall be styled “The Ramsey Town Commissioners”; the Act further determined the powers vested in the Commission and the manner of rotation of Commissioners to each election. The number of members was subsequently increased to twelve and has remained as such to date.

In 2012 the Commission was requested to consider whether, in the light of a scheme then being promoted by Castletown Commissioners to reduce the number of members of that Authority, it would review the membership of Ramsey Town Commission. This matter was discussed at the December 2012 meeting at which time the Commission, conscious of the costs associated with public inquiries, and also aware that the debates about social housing and scope may impact on this and other authorities, decided not to proceed with any change but to review the position early in 2015 so that any change could become effective for the next general local authority elections. In 2016 the Commission discussed the possible amalgamation of wards, following a notice of motion to which an amendment was proposed seeking also to reduce the membership; however the motion failed at that time. In March 2018 the Commission rejected a motion placed by the Chairman Mr A. Cowie to reduce the number of members from 12 to 10; the motion was defeated by 8 votes to 2.

In the lead up to the 2016 general local authority election five authorities progressed proposals to reduce membership (three by amalgamation):-

- **Castletown**

At the March 2014 sitting of Tynwald Court the Castletown (Number of Commissioners) Order 2014 was approved. The Order took effect from 1st April 2014 and provided that from 1st May 2016 the number of Members of that authority would reduce from nine to seven and that in the event of any casual vacancy no election shall be held to fill a casual vacancy in the members of the local authority arising on or after 1 April 2014 unless the number of members had fallen below 7.

**Town Clerk's Report - Local Authority Membership -
September, 2019, - Information Report**

- **Peel**

At the March 2015 sitting of Tynwald Court the Peel (Number of Commissioners) Order 2015 was approved. The Order took effect from 1st April 2015 and provided that from 1st May 2016 the number of Members of that authority would reduce from nine to seven and that in the event of any casual vacancy no election shall be held to fill a casual vacancy in the members of the local authority arising on or after 1 April 2015 unless the number of members had fallen below 7.

- **Garff**

The Garff (Local Government District) Order 2015 combined the previous local authority areas of Laxey, Lonan and Maughold, reducing the membership from 17 members to nine members. The Order came into effect at the 2016 local authority general elections.

Since 2016 five further local authorities have taken steps towards reducing memberships:-

- **Douglas Town Council**

The Douglas (Alteration of Wards and Number of Members) Order 2019 was approved at the April 2019 sitting of Tynwald. The Order reduces membership from 18 to 12 and reduces the number of Wards from six to four with three Members representing each Ward, mirroring the House of Keys boundaries. The Order will come into effect at the April 2020 local authority general election where only 12 seats will be contested within Douglas.

- **Port Erin**

In March 2019 Port Erin Commissioners gave notice under the Local Government (Notice of Schemes) Regulations 1986 (Government Circular 237/86) that it has made a scheme under Section 9(2) of the Local Government Act 1985 to reduce their number of Commissioners from nine to seven members. The matter has been the subject of a public inquiry; the report of the appointed person thereto will be made to and considered by the Minister for Infrastructure and a decision then made as to whether an Order bringing effect to the scheme will be presented to Tynwald for approval. Subject to approvals the reduction in members would become effective at the April 2020 general local authority elections.

Town Clerk's Report - Local Authority Membership - September, 2019, - Information Report

- **Port St Mary**

In February 2019 Port St Mary Commissioners gave notice under the Local Government (Notice of Schemes) Regulations 1986 (Government Circular 237/86) that it has made a scheme under Section 9(2) of the Local Government Act 1985 to reduce their number of Commissioners from nine to five members. The matter has been the subject of a public inquiry; the report of the appointed person thereto will be made to and considered by the Minister for Infrastructure and a decision then made as to whether an Order bringing effect to the scheme will be presented to Tynwald for approval. Subject to approvals the reduction in members would become effective at the April 2020 general local authority elections.

- **Arbory & Rushen**

The two local authority areas have recently embarked on a consultation into potential amalgamation; no further details are available at this time.

The attached table details the current membership of each of the Island's Local Authorities together with data about population, number of voters and number of households, presenting the level of representation per individual local authority member for comparison purposes.

Notwithstanding the obvious disparity between the level of representation which exists in parish authority areas, it can be seen that, in comparison to other larger and similar sized areas, Ramsey has a higher level of representation, this position will be further highlighted when the amendment to Douglas representation is effected in at the next general election which will see populations of approximately 30,000 and 7,500 in Douglas and Ramsey being represented by 12 elected local authority members in each area.

Any discussion regarding the number of Members would as a necessity have regard to the town wards. These are presently determined geographically as following the line of the Leighany Stream being the ancient parish boundary. Consideration would be needed as to the overall number of members and whether that membership was applied to a single constituency, as with the Keys constituency, or whether the town should be divided into two or more ward areas.

There are limited financial implications in relation to Membership being related only to printing and distribution of papers and Membership allowances, eleven of the Commissions Members currently claim attendance allowances. There are no financial consequences in regard to the number of candidates at an election, although a reduction in wards to a single constituency would result in a small administrative saving in election fees.

**Town Clerk's Report - Local Authority Membership -
September, 2019, - Information Report**

Enquiries of the Department of Infrastructure in relation to other authority proposals indicate that the timescale for any change is that the Department would seek a minimum 6 -9 months from the resolution by the Authority to final Tynwald approval (or not). If a decision to proceed with a change in Membership were to be considered then March 2020 would be the very latest that it could be approved by Tynwald in order to meet the April election timetable, but more realistically approval would be targeted for February 2020 to enable the arrangements to be put in place for the April 2020 elections. The Department has advised that the timeframes for paperwork, public notices etc. are so long that it really is not a quick process, and at this stage it is unlikely that any change could be effected in time for the 2020 elections. Any proposal if presented at this time would be required to incorporate transitional arrangements.

Recommendation: for discussion.

T. P. Whiteway
Town Clerk and Chief Executive.

4th September 2019.

Table showing local authority membership and representation levels per authority by population, voter and household

DISTRICT / WARD	NUMBER OF SEATS	Number of Voters July 2019	Voters per member	Population 2016 census	Population per member	Households 2016 census	Households per member
Douglas *	18	19,507	1,084	26,997	1,500	11,592	644
Onchan	7	7,133	1,019	9,128	1,304	3,974	568
Peel	7	4,224	603	5,374	768	2,295	328
Ramsey	12	6,058	505	7,845	654	3,598	300
Braddan	5	2,393	479	3,621	724	1,346	269
Garff	9	3,410	379	4,240	471	1,765	196
Malew	5	1,762	352	2,167	433	959	192
Marown	5	1,722	344	2,246	449	863	173
Castletown	7	2,409	344	3,216	459	1,434	205
Port Erin *	9	2,877	320	3,484	387	1,611	179
Arbory	5	1,543	309	1,847	369	805	161
Rushen	5	1,286	257	1,537	307	651	130
Patrick	5	1,169	234	1,576	315	611	122
Andreas	5	1,124	225	1,397	279	595	119
Lezayre	5	1,015	203	1,276	255	510	102
Michael	7	1,271	182	1,591	227	659	94
Port St. Mary *	9	1,583	176	1,916	213	881	98
Ballaugh	5	848	170	1,032	206	442	88
German	5	807	161	966	193	417	83
Santon	5	562	112	700	140	301	60
Jurby	5	485	97	776	155	273	55
Bride	5	318	64	382	76	181	36
Total	150	63,506		83,314		35,763	
Douglas wef 1/5/20	12	18,500	1,542	26,997	2,250	11,592	966
Port Erin TBC	7	2,793	399	3,484	498	1,611	230
Port St Mary TBC	5	1,578	175	1,916	213	881	98