

RAMSEY TOWN COMMISSIONERS

[PUBLIC]

An Extra-ordinary Meeting of the Ramsey Town Commissioners was held using a telephone conference call system on Tuesday 5th May, 2020, at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Mr. A. G. Cowie, Mesdames M. B. Quayle and J. Wedgwood, Messrs' Revd Canon N. D. Greenwood, N. Howard, J. McGuinness (part of meeting) A. J. Oldham, L Parker, and W. G. Young.

Apologies: Messrs' W. L. Hankin and F. B. R. Williams

The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk were in attendance.

The meeting had been convened as an Extra-ordinary meeting in accordance with Standing Orders and the Chairman thanked Members for their attendance at short notice.

(2020 /21:001) Covid -19 Emergency - Potential opening up of Non-Essential Retail:

The Chairman welcomed Members and asked the Town Clerk to provide a summary of the discussions held at officer level earlier in the day.

The Town Clerk reported that he and the Deputy Town Clerk had attended a virtual meeting Chaired by Police Superintendent S. Maddocks, with officers from the Department of Enterprise, DEFA, Police, Fire Services, Douglas Town Centre Management and the Department of Infrastructure. The meeting had been called to discuss means by which Government could assist retailers in getting back to business as normal as soon as possible, making everyone safe and able to comply with social distancing. The discussion related to retail only and not to service based activities (i.e. hairdressers, nail bars, etc.).

Supt Maddocks had reminded officers that under the emergency provisions change in regulations were needed so that advice and guidance reflected the law; and that the police can only enforce the law as it stands, rather than guidance.

DoE guidance had been circulated based on the UK British Retail Consortium guidance for retail operations, compliance would be a matter for individual retailers. Discussions with the retail sector had indicated that most retailers wished to reopen, and that stock levels are considered good for future weeks or months.



(2020 /21:001) Covid -19 Emergency - Potential opening up of Non-Essential Retail Continued:

The general view from government officers was that in order to enable high street retail to open, particularly in relation to Douglas and Ramsey, vehicle access should be prohibited from high streets (i.e. Parliament Street). It was suggested that barriers should not be used, that queues be restricted to each shop frontage, and queues must be tight against shop. This view was supported by the Fire Service in terms of maintaining emergency access and the Police who felt that people will step into road in order to maintain social distancing and therefore the streets would be unsafe if trafficked. Pedestrianisation would be recommended for highstreets for the short term, with regulation put in place using emergency powers.

The Town Clerk had raised the issue of the definition of the 2 metre social distancing rule, i.e. that it applied to being in conversation for 15 minutes within 2 metres of someone infected but not displaying symptoms. This was acknowledged however the meeting had noted that the 2 metre rule is what is being applied and that many people would wish to adhere to it resulting in people wishing to not come within that distance when in public places.

The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk had raised the loss of parking in the main street and the fact that much of the town disabled parking was in the main street. Further discussion is to take place with Government and other authorities; the Commission is presented with the opportunity to comment on the potential emergency provision before a report is made to Council of Ministers probably in the coming few days.

The Chairman thanked the Town Clerk for the summary and referred to a previous Town Commissioners internal discussion paper and a suggestion that closure be applied on a Saturday only, and indicated that if the closure was as indicated to be for all shopping days then he would wish to see Christian Street remain open to enable access to the Co-op Car Park and to enable traffic movement.

Mr. Oldham suggested that two spaces to the rear of War Memorial might be designated as disabled, there was no objection from Members. Mr. Oldham also suggested a reversal of Bourne Place to enable traffic flow from Water Street to Market Place, the Town Clerk reminded members that temporary traffic reversal could cause problems if the street closure was not permanent (i.e. 24/7).

Mr. McGuinness joined the meeting at 7.15 p.m. The Town Clerk provided a brief recap of earlier discussion. In response to a question from Mr. McGuinness the Town Clerk confirmed that actions are likely to be under Government emergency powers.

Mrs. Quayle stated that from a public health perspective she fully agreed with closing the street to traffic, she was supported in this view by Mrs. Wedgwood who felt that pedestrian streets work in Douglas, Peel and other places.



(2020 /21:001) Covid -19 Emergency - Potential opening up of Non-Essential Retail Continued:

Mr. Parker asked whether the Quayside would be included, he felt that it would be safer if cars were permitted on the main street as parking and traffic would restrict pedestrian movement. Mrs. Quayle stated that it was already difficult to walk down the street and maintain social distancing.

The Chairman asked if any Members had a strong objection to shutting the street to traffic. Mr. McGuinness felt that in the circumstances it was not the Commission's position to object, the Chamber of Commerce and retailers might feel aggrieved, however without wider discussion the Commission shouldn't submit any comment. Mr. Young supported this view however felt that it is the wrong time to open retail as he felt it is too soon. It was agreed that overall in the emergency circumstances and to aid retail Members would not object to traffic restrictions.

Mr. Parker raised the subject of deliveries and mail. If coffee shops and cafes are not open the footfall will be lower and wouldn't necessitate restrictions on traffic.

Mrs. Wedgwood reiterated her view that closing the street to traffic would make it safer for shoppers and provide footfall. She felt that lots of people need and would appreciate extra space including users of wheelchairs, mobility scooters and prams.

The Chairman put a number of recommendations to be made on the basis of traffic restrictions as follows:-

- To retain Christian Street as a traffic-route open for traffic flow. Mr. Oldham suggested a one way system for Christian Street however members noted the need to facilitate traffic flow and deliveries to Co-op. Mr. McGuinness supported the Chairman's proposal and there was no objection.
- That the closure apply from West Street junction. Agreed.
- Closure times be suggested as 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. Monday to Saturday – to reflect general shop opening hours. Members noted the need to relocate residents' parking, questioned access for deliveries and agreed delivery logistics should be raised with DoI to determine. Members agreed the closure times proposed.
- That the Plaza Car Park be designated 2 hours maximum, with 2 disabled spaces. Agreed.
- That the town spaces to the rear of the War memorial in Water Street be designated for disabled use. Agreed.
- That the DoI be asked to designate one third of the Albert Road Car Park as short-stay 2 hours spaces, retaining the remainder as long stay. Agreed.
- That some space in Market Place Car park be designated 30 minutes collection only bays.

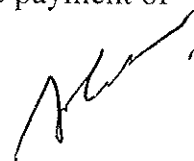
(2020 /21:001) Covid -19 Emergency - Potential opening up of Non-Essential Retail Continued:

Mr. Parker reiterated his view that coffee shops and restaurants when opened will provide the biggest influx. Members noted that the proposal left only service based business closed, i.e. hairdressing, nail bars, etc. Mrs. Wedgwood and Mrs. Quayle opposed Mr. Parker's view, stating that if Covid-19 cases rise the Island will have a major problem, moving ahead with caution and seeing what happens was the best strategy.

Mr. McGuinness stated that in general terms he was in favour of pedestrianisation, but felt that it should be discussed properly; the current move felt like a back-door route and avoided proper debate with stakeholders. Members agreed unanimously that the arrangements could only be considered as emergency provisions and that the "longer term normal" does need more debate. Any input from the Commission was agreed as being on that basis only and not indicative of any permanent acceptance of these measures.

The Chairman thanked Members for their attendance at short notice, necessary under the circumstances, during the current crisis and for their contribution to the meeting held under difficult circumstances.

The meeting closed at 8:20 p.m. giving a time of 1½ hours for the payment of attendance allowances.



Chairman.