

# RAMSEY TOWN COMMISSIONERS

## Elections and Engagement Policy

Originating Officer	TPW
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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Ramsey Town Commissioners were constituted under the Ramsey Town Act 1865 and exist as a body corporate within the context of the law, Commissioners are popularly elected to act in the best interest of the authority and of the Town which they are elected to represent.
- 1.2 The Commission has 12 elected representatives, six representing each of the Towns two electoral wards. Commissioners are elected to serve for a term of 4 years as part of the Islands national local authority election.
- 1.3 General elections for all Island Local Authorities took place in 2016, with the next general election taking place in 2020, and every fourth year thereafter.
- 1.4 General Elections are held during the month of April on common date determined by the Department of Infrastructure under the Local Elections Act 1986.
- 1.5 Where vacancies occur then, subject to the provisions of the Local Elections Act 1986, there may be a requirement to fill the vacancy by bye-election.
- 1.6 This policy is developed to promote and engage community interest in the activity of the authority, to promote participation in the democratic process either as candidates or voters in order to ensure that the authority Membership best presents the interests of the community of Ramsey as a whole.

## 2. Overview

- 2.1 The Policy has been developed within the overarching Ramsey Town Commissioners vision **"Making Ramsey a better place to be"**.
- 2.2 Ramsey Town Commissioners mission is to:-
  - Provide excellent levels of service to residents, businesses and visitors
  - Be financially responsible
  - Inspire community spirit
  - Maintain and improve our environment in a sustainable manner
  - Communicate clearly and regularly with our community
  - Work with government and other agencies for the benefit of our town

## 3. Political Structure

- 3.1 The Commissions functions are split into a number of prime areas, each of which is led by a Commissioner appointed at the Annual General Meeting. These areas are:-
  - Finance General Purposes and Establishment
  - Housing and Property
  - Works and Development
  - Parks and Leisure
- 3.2 The Commission also has four standing Committees:-
  - Housing Allocation Committee chaired by the Lead Member for

#### Housing and Property

- Establishment Committee chaired by the Lead Member for Finance and General Purposes.
- Policy Committee comprising the four Lead Members
- The Northern Civic Amenity Site Management Committee within which the Commission appoints one representative, the other members of the Committee being a representative appointed by each of Andreas, Ballaugh, Bride, Jurby, Lezayre and Garff (Maughold Ward).

3.3 The Commission nominates elected Commissioners to serve on the Ramsey and Northern Districts Housing Committee, and on the Northern Swimming Pool Board, those persons holding office for a term of three years.

3.4 The Commissioners annually elect representatives to serve on the following bodies :-

- The Housing Advisory Committee. (1 year)
- The Ramsey Regeneration Committee
- The Manx Wildlife Trust
- The Ramsey Chamber of Commerce
- The Northern Neighbourhood Policing Team
- The Northern Traffic Management Liaison Group
- The Isle of Man Municipal Association. [Two members]

## 4. Statutory Provisions

4.1 Local Authority elections are governed by the Local Elections Act 1986, Rules made thereunder and by certain applied provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1995.

4.2 Rules made under the Local Elections Act provide for the conduct of elections and absent voting.

4.3 Copies of all legislative provisions related to local elections can be found on the IOM Government Department of Infrastructure Website  
<https://www.gov.im/categories/home-and-neighbourhood/elections-and-voting/local-authority-election/>

## 5. Election Process

5.1 The process for elections is provided for within statute under the provisions of the Local Elections Act 1986, the application of certain provisions within the Representation of the People Act 1995, the Local Election Rules 2003, and the Local Elections (Fees) Order 2016.

5.2 Where a casual vacancy occurs within 6 months before the day on which the member would regularly have retired, an election is not held unless the vacancy results in the total number of unfilled vacancies in the membership of the authority exceeding one third of the whole number of members. Where an election is not held, the vacancy is filled at the next ordinary election. In the case of Ramsey this provision is applied to each Ward independently.

5.3 Sections 11-15, of the Local Elections Act 1986, ("the 1986 Act") deal with vacancies.

- 5.4 Section 14 of the 1986 Act states that Local Authorities shall, except in any case in which a declaration has been made by the High Court under the Act, declare an office to be vacant where a member of a local authority ceases to be qualified to be a member of the authority; or becomes disqualified for being a member of the authority otherwise than by virtue of section 7(6) of that Act; or
- i) a conviction; or
  - (ii) a breach of any provision of the Representation of the People Act 1995; or ceases to be a member of the authority by reason of failure to attend meetings of the authority;
- 5.5 Where the Authority has declared a vacancy, then a Bye-Election must take place within 42 days of the date upon which the office became vacant.
- 5.6 In the case of a resignation, the date of the vacancy is fixed by section 15(1)(b) of the 1986 Act. The receipt of the notice of the resignation by the Clerk is the date on which the vacancy has occurred.
- 5.7 Upon receipt of the notice of resignation, the local authority must issue a public notice of casual vacancy under section 15(2)(b). Once the notice is issued (by a public notice in the newspaper at least once in each of 2 successive weeks), a copy of that notice should be sent to the Department in accordance with section 15(3) of the 1986 Act.
- 5.8 In order for a valid election to be held, 2 local government electors from the district of the authority must have submitted notice in writing requesting that an election be held. Once received then an election must thereafter be held within 42 days of that request (section 17(1)(b)).
- 5.9 The following table outlines the statutory steps to be taken following the occurrence of a casual vacancy, in the case of the Commission declaring a vacancy as a consequence of a Member being no longer qualified the 42 day limit commences immediately the vacancy is declared by the act of publication in one or more newspapers.

<b>Day Count</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Statutory Provision</b>
	Notice of Casual Vacancy	Section 15(1)(b) of the Local Elections Act 1986 – to be published in at least one newspaper in each of two successive weeks (S30 Representation of the People Act 1995)
0	Declaration of Vacancy in Office  Receipt of Notice requesting Election	S14 Local Elections Act 1986  S15(3) Local Elections Act 1986
1	Notice of Election and advice for Absent Voters public notice in local newspapers and on	Local Election Rules 2003 Rule 6.  <i>Not less than 7 days nor more than 14 days</i>

	notice boards	<i>before the last day for the delivery of nomination papers.</i>
15	Delivery of Nominations	<i>Not more than 28 days and not less than 21 days before the date of election</i>
16	Withdrawals and Objections	<i>Not later than 2pm on the next day after delivery of nominations</i>
16	Publication Nominations and Withdrawals on notice board.	Local Election Rules 2003 Rule 17. <i>Immediately after the time for withdrawals and objections.</i>
	Notice of Poll public notice IOM Courier and on notice boards	Local Election Rules 2003 Rule 23. <i>As soon as practicable after the time for withdrawals and objections.</i>
	Polling Cards issued for distribution by IOM Post	Local Election Rules 2003 Rule 28 – after Absent Voter applications.
	Notice of Poll public notice IOM Examiner	Local Election Rules 2003 Rule 23.
42	Election Day	

*The Commission will undertake the election process in accordance with the statutory requirements.*

## 6. Increased engagement in the election process

The Commission has considered a number of opportunities which exist to promote the election process from inclusion on the register of electors to participation as candidates and voters in the poll.

### 6.1 Increase awareness of registration process

Electoral Registers are maintained by the Cabinet Office; revised registers are issued on a quarterly basis and held by local authorities for each electoral district. An Electoral Canvas is undertaken annual by the Cabinet Office.

Information about registration is included on the IOM Government Website <https://www.gov.im/categories/home-and-neighbourhood/elections-and-voting/register-to-vote/>.

*The Commission will promote the Electoral Canvas on its web and social media pages, reports will also be included within the Board papers.*

*Revisions to the Register of Electors are issued quarterly and a task reminder has been established for publicising each issue on the Commissions Website, Facebook and other social media platforms when made.*

## 6.2 Election Timetable

Establishing of the election timetable seeking to ensure that maximum time available is used for the election process, having regard for public holidays and other events (i.e. TT races, Bank Holidays etc)

*Immediately a vacancy is notified the Commission will seek to establish the election calendar seeking to ensure the maximum lead in period to polling days within the constraints of legislation. The timetable will be published on our web and social media platforms, notified to local media representatives, and drawn to the attention of any prospective or nominated candidates.*

## 6.3 Online Media

Regular posting of updates regarding the election process on Website and on the Commissions, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter feeds. Use of the banner page to update on the election process.

Provision of hyperlinks or the use of QR codes referencing web or social media sites providing assistance or advice can assist by ensuring that information is readily and easily accessible for interested parties.

*All election publications required to be made by statute will be published on the Commissioners Website and social media pages in addition to any statutory requirement (i.e. notice boards or newspapers)*

*Commencing from the announcement of a vacancy or election the Commission will promote such through its website and use of its social media platforms with the aim of posting a new item for engagement at least once every two days.*

## 6.4 Election Mailing List

Use of Mail Chimp or similar to allow residents to register their interest and receive election specific updates during the course of the election process. All data to be deleted following completion of the poll process.

*The Commission will investigate the use of MailChimp or a similar platform to enable voters to register to receive notification of any information relevant to the election process in future elections.*

## 6.5 Local media newspaper articles and radio interviews.

At the outset of the election process the publication of a media article outlining recent decisions taken by the authority and inviting people to consider "what would you do", along with an invitation to participate in future decision making by standing for election.

*Staff will maintain media contacts with the aim of seeking support in promoting local interest at future elections. In the case of a Bye-election media releases will be issued on behalf of/in conjunction with the Chairman of the authority. For general elections the Commission is unable to be seen to favour or promote any individual existing member (if standing) and a general announcement will be issued without quotes.*

*Recent decisions will be highlighted with the assistance of local media contacts on any future election announcement.*

*Candidates standing will be asked to provide their contact details for distribution to local media representatives to maximise engagement.*

## 6.6 Banners at the town hall and larger notices (A3) on public noticeboards.

These may be factual, i.e. Polling Today, Use Your Vote, Candidates Wanted, or more challenging such as "Your community needs your vote" – these might be generated through engagement with RGS student groups.

*The Commission will prepare election process banners for display at the town hall during future elections. Themes to include "Opportunities to serve YOUR community", "Ramsey needs you vote", etc, including .....*

*Public Notice Boards will be dedicated to the election process whilst underway. Additional temporary board locations will be investigated for use during future elections.*

## 6.7 Meet the Commissioners Session

Providing the opportunity to meet with existing Commissioners enables prospective candidates the opportunity to engage with members and obtain further information on the benefits and commitments associated with serving as a local authority member.

*Prior to the date for close of nominations the Commission will host an open public session at which persons interested in standing as candidates can meet with existing Commissioners and senior staff to learn more about the structure and activities of the authority.*

## 6.8 Production of an information package for candidates.

Providing information to prospective candidates including information on the election process, existing Commissioners, contact details, duties and responsibilities, accounts etc.

*For general elections the Commission will supplement information provided through the Department of Infrastructure with local and relevant further details, this will be offered to all prospective candidates and made available via our web and social media platforms and at the town hall.*

## 6.9 Publication of manifestos on RTC media pages

In order to maintain balance and impartiality manifestos are not posted unless all the manifestos were available for publication.

*In all elections candidates will be encouraged to issue manifestos for publication as soon as possible as this assists in enabling media interest to be generated.*



*If individual candidates choose not to issue a manifesto then they will be asked to agree to the manifestos of remaining candidates being published along with a short summary of their own candidature – ie Name address, occupation.*

#### 6.10 Issue of manifestos along with Polling Cards.

The option exists to distribute a synopsis of each candidate along with the polling cards. In order to ensure balance each candidate could be invited to provide a head and shoulders photo and no more than a set number of words which would be published in candidate alphabetical order and distributed with the Polling Cards. Candidates might be requested to meet the cost of publication and any additional distribution costs.

*The Commission is unable to promote candidates however will investigate distribution and provide the opportunity for candidates to contribute subject to all candidates being in agreement thereto.*

#### 6.11 Guidance for candidates

Issue of guidance to candidates through consolidation of existing publications made available through the Government Website and other sources.

*The Commission will make available to all candidates copies or links to all source information on the duties and responsibilities of Commissioners together with guidance on the election process.*

#### 6.12 Invitation for candidates to meet the press.

Holding a drop in session for electorate to meet candidates.

*The Commission will facilitate a "meet the candidates" drop in session either at the town hall or other suitable location prior to the date for the poll. All candidates will be invited to attend.*

#### 6.13 Requisition meeting

Holding of a requisition meeting for candidates to be held in the days prior to the election, with sufficient time to enable local media interests to attend, produce and publish media articles on the matter.

*As soon as an election is called the Commission will make arrangements (date, venue, Chairman, media coverage) for the hosting of a public meeting for each Ward to which all candidates for that Ward will be invited to attend. The meeting*

### 7. Engagement

In order to maintain public interest in its activities the Commission will:-

- Ensure that all agendas and minutes are available for inspection on its website;
- Ensure that relevant and timely information on our activities and services is available via the Commissioners website;

- Maintain opportunities for ratepayers to contact the Commission through counter and telephone services, mail, email, web and social messenger platforms;
- Participate in public drop in sessions to meet elected representatives at least once in each quarter;
- Provide regular media releases on the Commission decisions and activities;
- Promote community activities, events, stories of interest on social media platforms to maintain high levels of engagement;
- Seek community views on the establishment of new, or review of existing policies, through SurveyMonkey or other similar processes, at an appropriate juncture during the process, ensuring that the opportunity to respond in writing is always available;
- Engage with local schools to promote pupils interest in local authority and community issues;
- Consider any further opportunities presented to it in order to extend or improve engagement with the local community.

## 8. Policy Review

8.1 This policy will be subject to review by the Commission every **fourth year** and will be presented to the Board for such purpose at the June meeting in the year of each General Election, commencing 2020.

## 9. Responsible Officer

9.1 This policy falls under the responsibility of The Town Clerk and any question in relation thereto, and responsibility for application, management, review and reporting thereon is vested therein.