

RAMSEY TOWN COMMISSIONERS
[PUBLIC]

The Monthly Board Meeting of the Ramsey Town Commissioners was held in the Boardroom of the Town Hall, Ramsey, on Wednesday, 20th September, 2023, at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Mr. A. J. Oldham, Miss L. L. Craine, Messrs. A. R. Beighton, R. D. Cowell, J. McGuinness, F. B. R. Williams and W. G. Young.

Apologies for absence Messrs. G. Court, Revd Canon N. D. Greenwood, S. R. Kelly, L. Parker, L. I. Singer.

The Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Finance Officer, Housing Property Manager, Technical Services Manager, and Minute Clerk were in attendance.

(2023/24:136) Minutes:

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 16th August, 2023, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following:

Clauses “agreed” – Miss Craine queried voting on clauses with the wording “agreed” – members were informed that in these cases there was no division in voting.

Clause 134d) – Miss Craine queried which Department was referred to – members were informed that it was the Department for Education, Sport and Culture – the clause will be suitably amended to reflect this.

(2023/24:137) Matters Arising:

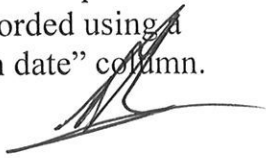
No matters not appearing within the agenda were specifically raised.

Matters for Information:

(2023/24:138) Action Tracker September, 2023:

Resolved: To note the “Action Tracker” to 14th September, 2023, subject to the following and accepting that some matters may be referred to within other Clauses of these minutes:-

Miss Craine queried the removal of the column indicating date of the last action on matters included in the action tracker. Members were reminded that this column had been removed at Miss Craine’s request, made at the June, 2023 Board Meeting. Miss Craine indicated that its removal had not been intended when she made her request. Members were reminded that last action / reporting in any matter is recorded using a green typeface. The Town Clerk undertook to reinstate the “last action date” column.



(2023/24:138) Action Tracker September, 2023 continued:

Bicycle Shelters – Mr. Cowell queried the revision to the planning application for the bicycle shelter to be located in Station Road Car Park. Members were informed that the location is repositioned closer to the Shoprite Store entrance. Mr. Williams queried if regard had been taken of the “Dial-a-Ride” drop off point – the Town Clerk responded that he understood that this had been done.

Mooragh Park Shelter Art – Mr. Cowell asked for an update with regard to the shelter art – the Deputy Town Clerk informed members that 3 shelters have been rendered; art work to one shelter will commence in approximately one week, and another in a few weeks – other shelters can then be “allocated”.

(2023/24:139) Action Tracker Budget Approved and Proposed Projects:

Resolved: To note the Action Tracker of Budget Approved projects at 14th September, 2023 and that for proposals for 2023/24, subject to the following:-

Station Road Car Park Resurface – in response to a query from Mr. Beighton, the Technical Services Manager informed members that the works have been “programmed in”.

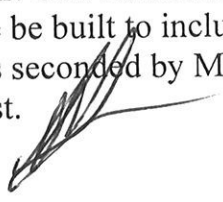
Finance and General Purposes:

(2023/24:140) Town Clerk’s Report – Proposed Public Open Space / Habitat Creation Cloughbane:

Members considered the Town Clerk’s report dated 8th September, 2023, conveying the offer to acquire land at Cloughbane, at no purchase cost to the Commissioners, for use as public open space. A proposal by Miss Craine that the Commission proceed when the Manx Wildlife Trust Survey is received did not receive a seconder. The Town Clerk reminded members that any ultimate acquisition of the land would require the submission of a Petition and the approval of the Department of Infrastructure.

Mr. Beighton queried if it was premature to make a decision now before advice is received. The Town Clerk suggested inclusion of the matter on the “Action Tracker”, to be progress upon receipt of advice, particularly with regard to the possible inclusion of a footpath, as part of the land seems to be being used as a shortcut.

Resolved: Following a proposal by Mr. Cowell that the Commission thank the company for their offer; that a scheme be built to include costs and the matter be further considered. The proposal was seconded by Mr. Beighton and carried by 6 votes to 1, Mr. Williams voting against.



(2023/24:141) Deputy Town Clerk's Report – Cloideryn Productions Request:

Prior to consideration of the clause, and despite not formally being required to do so, Mrs. Chrystal declared an interest.

Members considered the Deputy Town Clerk's report dated 13th September, 2023, conveying the request made by Cloideryn Northern Theatre Group for financial assistance toward their pending trip to San Diego to commemorate the 160th Anniversary of the launch of "Euterpe" from Ramsey, and now, known as "The Star of India" the main feature of the Maritime Museum. The request follows the successful production of a factual musical based on the history of the ship and at which a party from San Diego came to Ramsey.

Mr. Beighton queried if there was a policy in regard to giving donations of the nature of that sought. The Town Clerk advised not but there is a precedent in that donations are given to the Town Band and Shennaghys Jiu. Mr. Beighton commended the endeavour of the Theatre Group, and although the Commission's hands are tied because of lack of budget, proposed support of the group. Mr. Cowell fully supported the group, recognising the visit to San Diego as a wonderful boost for our town, and commented that Commission could support them.

Miss Craine commented on the wonderful opportunity to promote Ramsey and the Isle of Man but expressed concern at spending ratepayers money for the benefit of only a few people especially as the Commission do not support other clubs and societies; and hoped that Cloideryn would understand this situation.

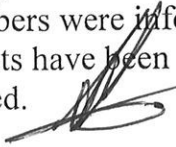
Mr. McGuinness queried if there was allowance to give to such organisations within the Local Government Act? (year). The Town Clerk informed members of his understanding that the Commission could not necessarily give to organisations unless there was a vires to do so. Mr. McGuinness commented that confirmation was needed to determine whether or not the Commissioners can give grants or donations. The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk undertook to check the legislation and come back to the Board if necessary.

(2023/24:142) Finance Officer's General Report:

Resolved: To note and approve the Finance Officer's general report dated 13th September, 2023, subject to the following:-

Mr. Cowell, in his capacity as Lead Member, invited questions on the Finance Officer's.

Mr. McGuinness queried car parking asking if any spaces remained available at Water Street and also asked about an adjacent wall. Members were informed that a few spaces remained available for letting and that no costs have been incurred with regard to the wall, the condition of which is being monitored.



Works and Development:

(2023/24:143) Town Clerk's Report – Strategic Plan – Preliminary Publicity:

Members considered the Town Clerk's report dated 5th September, 2023, advising of commencement by the Cabinet Office of the review process of the 2016 Strategic Plan, and in respect of which the Town Clerk suggested responses to the preliminary consultation response form. The Town Clerk explained that the Strategic Plan will be an ongoing process in which the Commission will need to engage.

Resolved: That, following a proposal by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Mr. Beighton and agreed, by 6 votes to 1, Miss Craine voting against, the Commission support the suggested responses but highlight in Section 8, the Town's importance for commerce and industry in the North of the Island; and reinforce use of brown field sites.

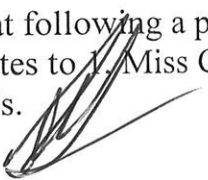
(2023/24:144) Technical Services Manager's Report - Planning Applications:

Resolved: To note the Technical Services Manager's Report dated 13th September, 2023, detailing planning applications received from the Department of the Environment, Food and Agriculture, under the planning consultation procedures, subject to the following:-

REF NO:	4026	<u>AMENDED PLANS</u>
P.A. NO.:	<u>22/01212/A</u>	
PROPOSED:	Approval in principle for proposed residential development, addressing means of access and number of plots	
NOTES:	Approval in Principle	
SITE:	The Auburns, 19, Lezayre Road, Ramsey.	

Miss Craine queried how many trees would be lost? Mr. Beighton responded that it appeared to be 1 registered tree but no other numbers were included in the report included with the application. It was noted that the amended application sought to address previous concerns raised by the Commission.

Resolved: That following a proposal by Mr. Williams, seconded by Mr. Cowell and agreed by 6 votes to 1, Miss Craine voting against, the Commission raise no objection to the proposals.



Parks and Leisure:

(2023/24:145) Deputy Town Clerk's Report – Green Flag – Site Evaluation / Mystery Shop:

Resolved: To note the Deputy Town Clerk's report dated 13th September, 2023, advising that the Mooragh Park has again been awarded "Green Flag" status and supplying a copy of the report of the "Mystery Shopper" who's report led to the award.

Mr. Williams requested that the Board's thanks be conveyed all the parks staff whose hard work resulted in the grant of the award. Miss Craine commented on the ingenious overhead watering system used in places in the park.

It was further resolved, following a proposal by Mr. Beighton, seconded by Miss Craine and agreed nem con, that the Commission run a social media presentation in recognition of the Green Flag award and to commemorate all that has been done in the park in recent years.

(2023/24:146) Deputy Town Clerk's Report – Manx Tri-Club Events 2024:

Members considered the Deputy Town Clerk's report dated 13th September, 2023, advising that the Manx TriClub has thanked the Commission for their support of the 2023 events and that they are now seeking support for repeating events in 2024, with the addition of an extra event – a super sprint to be held in July, 2024.

Resolved: That, following a proposal by Mr. Beighton, seconded by Mr. Williams and agreed nem con, support of the 2024 events be provided.

(2023/24:147) Deputy Town Clerk's Report – RNLI Chilly Dip 2024:

Members considered the Deputy Town Clerk's report dated 13th September, 2023, advising that the RNLI have sought permission to stage the 2024 New Year's Day Chilly Dip on the south foreshore.

Resolved: That, following a proposal by Mr. Beighton, seconded by Mr. Cowell and agreed nem con, permission be granted.

(2023/24:148) Christian Street – One Way System:

Members considered the Town Clerk's tabled report dated 12th September, 2023, conveying concerns reported about traffic in Christian Street. Miss Craine queried if any studies had been carried out with regard to traffic flow, visibility in Christian Street and for West Street. The Town Clerk informed members that the matter had been brought up approximately one year ago with the Department of Infrastructure who had not progressed the matter.

(2023/24:148) Christian Street – One Way System:

Mr. McGuinness referred to the traffic flow, which was part of the town plan and as such there is resolution to progress the matter with the Department of Infrastructure and ask them to include traffic in Christian Street. Miss Craine commented that the Department should also be asked to act with regard to traffic flow. Mr. Cowell referred to “bigger picture” and referred to the remainder of Parliament Street not having been redeveloped. Reference was also made to the lack of progression with regard to the redevelopment of the Quay side. The Town Clerk undertook to bring these concerns to the attention of the Department.

Resolved: That, following a proposal by Mr. Williams, seconded by Miss Craine and carried nem con, the Department be asked to act on these matters.

It was further resolved, and agreed nem con, to ask the complainants, with regard to traffic flow in Christian Street if their correspondence can be brought to the attention of the Department.

(2023/24:149) Items of Correspondence:

The following items of correspondence were brought to members’ attention – for action, noting or advance information.

149a) Climate Change Funding: Letter dated 21st August, 2023, received from the Department of Infrastructure advising that Climate Change Funding is only available for preparatory work, feasibility studies, businesses cases, etc., and not for funding any works.

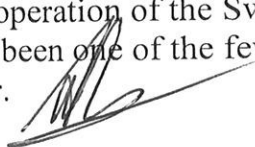
Resolved: That, following a proposal by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Mr. Beighton, and agreed nem con, that the Department of Infrastructure be informed of the Commission’s concern at the correspondence, which reflects a lack of support for and pays lip-service to climate change.

149b) Northern Chamber of Commerce:

Resolved: To note an email from the Chairman, Northern Chamber of Commerce, thanking representatives from the Commission, who attended a recent meeting; welcoming improved communications, but also expressing disappointment on some recent actions of the Commission.

149c) Northern Local Authorities Swimming Pool Board:

Members noted a circular letter addressed to the local authorities comprising the Northern Local Authorities Swimming Pool Board. The letter seeks the co-operation of the authorities in applying the discretionary rate contribution of 6p in the £ towards the operation of the Swimming Pool for 2024.. Members were reminded that Ramsey had been one of the few authorities that agreed to the increase for the current financial year.



b

149c) Northern Local Authorities Swimming Pool Board Continued:

Members recognised the value of the pool to the town and the North of the Island and Mr. Cowell proposed that the Commission again pay 6p in the £ contribution. Mr. Beighton commented that there was no need to decide this yet – a decision could be taken during the budget process. Mr. McGuinness agreed but commented that it would be of benefit to the Pool Board if they knew what rate contribution might be forthcoming. Mr. Beighton therefore seconded the proposal to pay a 6p contribution in 2024.

Mr. Williams proposed an extending amendment to invite the Minister to attend a meeting. Miss Craine seconded the proposal. Members queried which Minister as the Department of Infrastructure was responsible for the legislation concerning the pool and the department of Education, Sport and Culture was responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Pool.

The proposal and the amendment were voted upon, the invitation to be extended to both Minister, and carried nem con. Mr. McGuinness, because of his chairmanship of the Swimming Pool Board did not vote.

149d) Seaweed South Foreshore:

Members noted receipt of a communication concerning the clearance of seaweed on the South foreshore and agreed to defer consideration of the matter until responses from the Manx Wildlife Trust and the Department of Enterprise, Food and Agriculture are received.

149e) Proposed Housing Association:

Members noted an email from the Business Support Manager (Housing) conveying a letter from the Minister of the Department of Infrastructure advising of decision taken, by the Council of Ministers, to establish a Housing Association in the Isle of Man. The proposals are at an early stage and details will be presented at the Isle of Man Government Conference to be held on 21st September [at which the Commission's Housing and Property Manager will be present.

(2023/24:150) Sundry Matters – Town Clerk:

The Town Clerk drew attention to the following matters:-

150a) Highway Maintenance Charter – an updated copy of the proposed charter has been received and a future report will be made.

150b) Resource Waste Seminar – a report will be submitted to the October, 2023, Board meeting.

150c) Invitations – Civic Sunday Services – noted:
Douglas 24th September, 2023, and Marown 1st October, 2023.

150d) Resurfacing Birchem Avenue Close – the Town Clerk informed members that the Department of Infrastructure will undertake resurfacing works at Birchem Avenue Close commencing on 25th September.

(2023/24:151) Sundry Matters Raised by Members – Use of Description “Chairman”:

Miss Craine queried the continued use of the description of “Chairman” and suggested that the Commission consider using the gender-neutral description “Chair”.

Mr. Williams referred to the pending review of Standing Orders and suggested it might be appropriate to consider Miss Craine’s comments at that time.

No vote was taken on this matter.

The Chairman thank those watching the live-streaming and closed the public meeting at 8.12p.m.

The following items were considered in private the detail of which, having regard to data protection, matters affecting persons who cannot be named, etc., is not as extensive as that contained in minutes of matters discussed in public.

(2023/24:152) Minutes:

Resolved: To note and approve the Minutes of the Special Board Meeting held on 9th August, 2023, subject to the following:-

Clause 108 Highway Maintenance – Mr. Beighton queried when the Department of Infrastructure hope to schedule the works. The Technical Services Manager replied that the Department hope to have the necessary materials at the beginning of December. Members expressed the hope that the works could be scheduled, in liaison with the Chamber of Commerce, to avoid disruption during the busy Christmas period.

Matters for Information:

(2023/24:153) Minutes Meeting Northern Districts Civic Amenity Site Joint Committee:

Resolved: To note the Minutes of the meeting of the meeting of the Northern Districts Civic Amenity Site Committee held on 23rd March, 2023.

(2023/24:154) On-Going Matters “Action Tracker”:

Resolved: To note the “Action Tracker” to 13th September 2023, subject to the following:-

Town Branding – Mr. Beighton again queried to progress in promoting the Town Branding. Members were informed that it would be presented to the new Committee of the Chamber of Commerce and should be fully available before the Commission’s next meeting.

(2023/24:155) On-Going Matters - Register of Ruinous Property, Unsightly Land and Buildings:

Resolved: To note the “Register of Ruinous Property ..” to 13th September, 2023, subject to the following:-

10/11 West Quay - The Technical Services Manager reported that correspondence sent by Recorded Delivery to the owners had not been “picked-up” which left the Commission with the options of instructing a Structural Engineer to advise on works required to be undertaken, prior to the Commissioners possibly taking action; or serving Notice for repairs on the owners using the services of the Coroner.

Resolved: that following a proposal by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Mr. Beighton and agreed, nem con, that Notice be served via the Coroner.

“The Holly”, Grove Mount – the Technical Services Manager reported that the Executors of the estate of the late owner are attempting to commence action. In response to a query the Technical Services Manager advised that it was premature to service Notice.

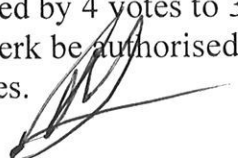
21, Bowring Road – the Technical Services Manager informed members that the owners are corresponding and some action to improve the property has been commenced.

Finance and General Purposes:

(2023/24:156) Town Clerk’s Report – Boundary Extension:

Members considered the Town Clerk’s report dated 13th September, 2023, advising that public notice has been given for the Pre-Inquiry meeting will be held at “The Mountain View Innovation Centre” on 2nd October, 2023, from 10.00 a.m.. The report indicated that 334 responses have been submitted following the consultation. Miss Craine asked if we had a breakdown or analysis of the responses. The Town Clerk informed members that he had requested copies of these so as to enable such analysis to be undertaken. Members were informed that the full Inquiry will, it is anticipated, be held approximately one month after this preliminary meeting. Members expressed concern that the time set for the preliminary meeting could precluded attendance. Mr. McGuinness queried who would be permitted to speak at the Inquiry; members being informed that only persons who have registered a wish to speak will be permitted to do so.

Resolved: That following a proposal by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Miss Craine and carried by 4 votes to 3, Messrs. Cowell, Oldham and Young voting against, the Town Clerk be authorised to prepare for the Inquiry with the Commission’s Advocates.



(2023/24:157) Deputy Town Clerk's Report – "Sauna":

Members considered the Deputy Town Clerk's report dated 13th September, 2023, advising of receipt of approaches made by 2 companies to operate mobile saunas in Ramsey both of whom are seeking the support of the Commission to their requests, which involve the Department of Infrastructure because of the need to site the saunas on public highway. It is uncertain at this time whether the operation is covered under Street Trading Legislation.

A proposal was put by Mr. McGuinness that officers be given authority to engage with the companies and obtain further information. Miss Craine seconded the proposal but proposed an amendment to inform the companies that the Commission think their proposals are positive for the town and offer any guidance possible.

Mr. Cowell concurred with the amendment and seconded the amendment, which was put to the vote and carried nem con.

(2023/24:158) Finance Officer's Report:

Resolved: To note Finance Officer's report dated 13th September, 2023, subject to the following:-

Estimates and Revenue Expenditure: The Finance Officer informed members that he has included a column in his summaries to reflect a proportion of the annual budget to coincide with the date of compilation of figures within his report and would welcome members' feedback. Mr. McGuinness commented that he felt the column did not add anything, but a proposal by Mr. Cowell to remove the column did not receive a seconder. The Finance Officer expanded on his notes included within this appendix.

Bank Balances: the Finance Officer informed members that the bank balance on the general account was lower than at this time last year because Treasury were procrastinating with regard to payment of approved capital borrowings.

Rent Arrears – the Finance Officer informed members that 3 tenants listed at Nos. 3, 14 and 23 within the list of rent defaulters had paid significant sums to reduce their arrears.

Reference was made to the debt of the tenant listed at No. 34 – it was proposed by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Miss Craine and agreed nem con, to progress recovery of the debt through the Small Claims' Court.

Aged Debtors – in response to a query members were informed that the tenant referred to in the preceding paragraph also had other debt with the Commission. It was agreed that this debt be included in the Small Claims' Court action.

A proposal by Miss Craine that the Rent Arrears List be shown by size of arrears; and the Aged Debtors list be shown by size of debt at 90 days, was seconded by Mr. McGuinness but failed by 5 votes to 2, no further support being forthcoming.

(2023/24:158) Finance Officer's Report continued:

General discussion ensued with regard to debt recovery, which resulted in a further proposal by Mr. McGuinness seconded by Mr. Beighton that debtors, both for Rent Arrears and Aged Debtors be presented on an exception basis having regard to debt recovery policy was carried by 5 votes to 2, Messrs. Cowell and Young voted against.

(2023/24:159) Technical Assistant's Report – Fixed Penalty Notices Appeal:

Members considered the Technical Assistant's report dated 6th September, 2023, advising of an appeal submitted against a Fixed Penalty Notice issued in respect of a perceived littering offence.

A proposal was moved by Miss Craine that the Commission reject the appeal. Mr. Beighton queried if the warden had discretionary powers to issue a warning – Members were informed giving discretionary powers had been discussed but decided against in order to protect the warden.

Mr. Beighton proposed that the Commission uphold the appeal, as had been the case in a similar incident of littering, this was seconded by Mr. Williams and carried by 5 votes to 2, Miss Craine and Mr. McGuinness voting against.

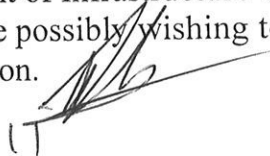
Mr. Williams's request that the that the Town Warden be thanks for his services was agreed.

Works and Development:

(2023/24:160) Technical Services Manager's Report – NCAS Request to Change Cost Contribution:

Members considered the Technical Services Manager's report dated 12th September, 2023, conveying details of the request made by Bride Parish Commissioners to vary the rate-based contribution towards the operation of the Northern Civic Amenity Site, and also, at the request of the Chairman of the NCAS Committee consider whether the structure of the Committee be changed to become an autonomous Board. The rate-based calculations are based on domestic and commercial rates which means that Bride pays the second highest rate contribution of 13.77%; Ramsey paying the greatest contribution of 53.82%; the other participating parishes paying between 4.37% and 8.24%. Bride is asking for the commercial rate to be dropped from the calculations which would reduce their contribution considerably. The calculation of payment is that agreed by all parties at the formation of the Committee and for which all parties have signed an agreement.

Resolved: That following a proposal by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Mr. Williams and agreed nem con, that the Commission agreed to adhere to the exiting arrangement; and that the attention of the Department of Infrastructure be brought to a potential problem of the status of the Committee possibly wishing to obtain "Board" status which would require enabling legislation.



(2023/24:161) Technical Services Manager's Report – Street Lights – Asbestos:

Resolved: To note the Technical Services Manager's tabled report dated 11th September, 2023, advising that Manx Utilities Authority have made her aware of the presence of asbestos in some fuse holders (cut outs) on street lighting columns. The Technical Services Manager advises that further information has been sought from that authority, upon receipt of which further report will be submitted to the Commission.

(2023/24:162) Technical Services Manager's Report – Festive Lights:

Members considered the Technical Services Manager's report dated 11th September, 2023, advising of the quotation obtained for maintenance of decorative lighting, and of the costs of the provision of additional festive lighting, the total cost of which remains under the budget allowance for 2023/24.

Resolved: That, following a proposal by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Mr. Williams, and agreed nem con, the quotation for maintenance and the additional works be accepted.

Members noted that three quotations were sought for the work, one company did not respond in time and a second declined to provide a quotation.

Housing and Property:

(2023/24:163) Minutes Housing Committee:

Noted for record purposes – the Housing Committee did not meet in September, 2023.

(2023/24:164) Housing and Property Manager's Report – Cronk Elfin Refurbishment Update:

Resolved: To note the Housing and Property Manager's report dated 12th September, 2023, providing an update on the refurbishment works progressing at Cronk Elfin, subject to the following:

Mr. Cowell referred to dissatisfaction about internal light fittings within the refurbished properties; the Housing and Property Manager indicated he was unaware of any complaints but undertook to investigate.

Miss Craine took the opportunity to convey thanks to the Housing and Property Manager and his staff for overseeing housing.

Matters of Establishment:

(2023/24:165) Minutes Establishment Committee:

Members discussed the Minutes of the meeting of the Establishment Committee held on 6th September, 2023.

Week to Monthly Pay – the Town Clerk informed members that he will be meeting with union representatives about the proposal to pay all staff on a monthly basis, and he would be able to report further after such meetings.

GDPR Services – a table of costs were presented. A proposal by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Mr. Beighton to defer consideration of this matter in view of time factors was agreed nem con.

Suspension of Standing Orders:

Because the number of members present did not equal 2/3rd of the total number of members it was not possible in terms of Standing Order 36(2) to suspend standing order to allow the meeting to continue beyond 10.00 p.m..

No matters were recorded in private.

The meeting closed at 10.00 p.m. giving a time of 3 hours for the payment of attendance allowances.

Chairman.