

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, 18th October, 2023, at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Mr. A. J. Oldham, Miss L. L. Craine, Messrs. A. R. Beighton, G. Court, R. D. Cowell, S. R. Kelly, J. McGuinness, L. Parker, L. I. Singer and W. G. Young.

Apologies for absence Messrs. Revd Canon N. D. Greenwood and F.B. R. Williams.

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

Members were informed that Mr. Beighton would be late in attending the meeting.

(2023/24:166) Minutes:

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 20th September, 2023, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Mr. Kelly proposed that consideration of the Deputy Town Clerk's report concerning "Sprintfest" be deferred until November in view of matters to be discussed in private have been considered. Mr. Cowell seconded the proposal. Mr. Parker declared an interest. Mr. McGuinness queried if there was sufficient time to facilitate a deferment; the Deputy Town Clerk advised that whilst things would be tight deadlines could be met.

The proposal was put to the vote and carried by 5 votes to 3 Miss Craine and Messrs. Court and McGuinness voting against. Mr. Cowell's possibly conflict of interest in this matter was queried and it was suggested that he should not have seconded the proposal nor voted. In these circumstances Mr. Singer indicated he would second the proposal. Mr. Cowell also withdrew his vote which resulted in the proposal to defer being carried by 4 votes to 3.

(2023/24:167) Matters Arising:

Chamber of Commerce: Mr. McGuinness referred to correspondence referred to last month received from the Chamber of Commerce concerning the wish of a member of the public to paint a lamppost and asked the Chairman if he could repeat the comments he had made to the Chamber with regard to costs. Mr. Oldham confirmed that he had repeated figures previously reported by the Technical Services Manager. Mr. McGuinness indicated that there had been a Freedom of Information request regarding the costs of Manx Utilities. The Town Clerk indicated that he had written to the Chamber of Commerce providing revised figures. He confirmed that the shop-owner had not been written to.

Matters for Information:

(2023/24:168) Action Tracker October, 2023:

Resolved: To note the “Action Tracker” to 11th October, 2023, subject to the following and accepting that some matters may be referred to within other Clauses of these minutes:-

Planning Enforcement Gladstone Park – Mr. Singer queried what action had been taken about the new cycle shop that has opened at Gladstone Park – the Town Clerk confirmed that the matter has been brought to the attention of DEFA Planning Enforcement and the Head of Planning which conveyed the Commission’s concern at the lack of action with the first breeches which had possibly contributed to this further breach.

Adoption of Land Auldyn Walk Provision of Playground Equipment – Mr. McGuinness queried if there was any progress in this matter. The Town Clerk informed members that the delay was related to the adoption of public open space which could only be undertaken when works are completed.

Mooragh Park Shelters Public Art – in response to a query from Mr. Kelly the Deputy Town Clerk updated members on progress with public art in the Mooragh Park Shelters as he understood work on one has been commenced. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that preparation work has been undertaken to 3 shelters and work has commenced on 2 and other shelters have been assigned and work can be commenced when preparation works are completed.

(2023/24:169) Action Tracker Budget Approved and Proposed Projects:

Resolved: To note the Action Tracker of Budget Approved projects at 11th October, 2023 and that for proposals for 2023/24, subject to the following:-

Street Lighting - Mr. Oldham informed members that he had received complaints that the street lights were too bright. Members were informed that the new lights were compliant with current standards and that the lights were providing “white” light which may seem brighter.

Toilets Millennium Garden – the Town Clerk informed members that the planning application has been refused for three reasons; siting; flood risk and design. The Town Clerk undertook to report further next month.

Town Hall Rear Entrance – in response to a query from Mr. Cowell the Town Clerk explained that the proposal is to make access easier.

Street Name Plates – in response to a query from Mr. Cowell the Town Clerk explained that the Technical Services Manager is sourcing a suitable supplier.

Finance and General Purposes:

(2023/24:170) Town Clerk's Report – Manx Telecom Wayleave Close ny Mooragh:

Members considered the Town Clerk's report dated 10th October, 2023, advising of the request by Manx Telecom for a wayleave agreement to be entered into with the Commissioners to facilitate the installation of a duct across the land at Close ny Mooragh for fibre optic cabling.

Resolved: That following a proposal by seconded by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Mr. Parker and agreed nem con, permission be granted subject to approval of the required petition in terms of Section 25 of the Local Government Act 1985.

(2023/24:171) Town Clerk's Report – Manx Utilities Wayleave Electricity Cable Bircham Avenue Close:

Members considered the Town Clerk's report dated 11th October, 2023, advising of the request by Manx Utilities for a wayleave agreement to be entered into with the Commissioners to facilitate the installation electric cabling across the land at Close Caarjys.

Resolved: That following a proposal by seconded by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Mr. Parker and agreed nem con, permission be granted subject to approval of the required petition in terms of Section 25 of the Local Government Act 1985.

(2023/24:172) Finance Officer's General Report:

Resolved: To note and approve the Finance Officer's general report dated 11th October, 2023.

Mr. Cowell commented on various aspects of the report and invited any questions – no further comments were made.

(2023/24:173) Technical Assistant's Report – Court Appearance:

Resolved: To note the Technical Assistant's report dated 9th October, 2023, advising of the successful prosecution of Mr. Courtenay Adam Lawrence Heading for offences against the town's byelaws with regard to control of dogs in prohibited areas.

Works and Development:

(2023/24:174) Town Clerk's Report – Waste Management Expo 2023 NEC Birmingham:

Resolved: To note the Town Clerk's report dated 27th September, 2023, concerning his visit to the Waste Management Expo 2023 event recently held in Birmingham.

Mr. Singer queried insurance costs for electric vehicles and he had seen reports that some insurers are increasing insurance fees by 60% - 70% for such vehicles; the Finance Officer informed members that the Commission's fleet vehicle insurance has seen an increase but this was not considered to be excessively greater than an inflationary increase and had regard to the Commission's electric vehicles.

(2023/24:175) Technical Services Manager's Report - Planning Applications:

Resolved: To note the Technical Services Manager's Report dated 9th October, 2023, detailing planning applications received from the Department of the Environment, Food and Agriculture, under the planning consultation procedures.

(2023/24:176) Technical Services Manager's Report – Proposed Changes to the Planning Act:

Members considered the Technical Services Manager's report dated 11th October, 2023, advising of receipt of a consultation with regard to proposed changes to the Planning Act, and suggesting responses to questions put with the consultation.

A proposal was put by Mr. Kelly that the matter be designated to the Lead Member, Deputy Lead Member and Technical Services Manager to progress. Mr. McGuinness made comment about the proposal to charge fees for pre-application discussions he felt it important to have open discussions with the Department; and also about the creation of off-street parking utilising 50% of a garden with which he agreed to some extent but considered planning and comments of the Highway Authority important in that process. Mr. McGuinness seconded Mr. Kelly's proposal.

Miss Craine commented about the loss of gardens as biodiversity is important, she was not comfortable with this and hoped it would be rejected.

An amendment was put by Mr. McGuinness, that the response as presented plus two point made by him be submitted was seconded by Miss Craine and agreed nem con.

Parks and Leisure:

(2023/24:177) Deputy Town Clerk's Report – Sprintfest:

Noted for record purposes and "Agenda Reference" that the Deputy Town Clerk's report on this matter is deferred to November, 2023.



(2023/24:178) Notice of Motion – Purple Lights for Pancreatic Cancer:

The Notice of Motion dated 9th October, 2023, standing in his name concerning the illumination of lights at the Swing Bridge, the Courthouse, and the front of the Town Hall to purple to reflect support for and raise awareness of pancreatic cancer was formally proposed by Mr. Cowell and seconded by Mr. Oldham.

Mr. Young asked what the action would cost and that he would prefer what was spent on lighting for this cause to be given to charity. Members were informed that the lighting could be changed easily and no additional costs would be incurred and the proposal was carried nem con.

The Chairman indicated that he is organising a fund-raising event for this cause at the Courthouse in the near future.

(2023/24:179) Responses to Correspondence:

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

179a) Northern Local Authorities Swimming Pool Board –

Request to meet Department Ministers – correspondence acknowledged, no date for a meeting has yet been suggested.

179b) Climate Change – Conveying the Commission's dissatisfaction on use of funding – correspondence acknowledged as noted.

179c) South Foreshore Beach Care – email correspondence from Mr. P. Duncan circulated. Proposed by Mr. Young, seconded Mr. Oldham and agreed by 6 votes to 3, Messrs. Court, McGuinness and Parker voting against that Mr. Duncan be invited to meet the Commission to discuss the matter.

(2023/24:180) Any Other Business:

180a) Traffic Christian Street – the Town Clerk informed members that he had a positive meeting with representatives from the Department of Infrastructure and brought to their attention the Commission's concerns about traffic direction in Christian Street and in general. Mr. Cowell asked if the matter of traffic was just Christian Street or on a wider basis. The Town Clerk confirmed that the remit could be widened but the initial focus would be on Christian Street and the junction at Parliament Square had also been brought to the Department's attention. Members were asked to feed any comments they had about traffic through the Board for onward transmission to the Department at a further officers' meeting.

180b) Public Open Space – Fairway Drive – the Town Clerk informed members that he would report further next month.

180c) Police Level One Meeting: Mr. Kelly informed members that he had attended a Level One Meeting, and whilst he was not permitted to reveal details he did comment on the good work being undertaken by the constabulary.

180d) Lheighany Field – Mr. Court queried the suggestion that the Lheighany Field be made available to Ramsey Football Club for training purposes. The Town Clerk informed members that no response has been received from the DSE as yet and reminded members that the Minister had been requested to meet with them to discuss the Swimming Pool Rate at which time it might be appropriate to put the question about this field.

It was proposed by Mr. Court, seconded by Mr. McGuinness and agreed nem con that a letter be sent to the Minister seeking response to the use of the field by the football club.

The Chairman thanked the representative of the media for attending and those watching the live-streaming and closed the public meeting at 7.52 p.m.

Mr. Beighton attended and the Finance Officer and Minute Clerk withdrew from the meeting at this stage.

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.

(2023/24:181) Pecuniary Interests:

Recorded in private

The Finance Officer and Minute Clerk returned to the meeting at this stage.

(2023/24:182) Minutes:

Resolved: To note, for record purposes, that no matters from the Board Meeting held on 20th September, 2023, were recorded in private.

Matters for Information:

(2023/24:183) Minutes Meeting Northern Districts Civic Amenity Site Joint Committee:

Resolved: To note the Minutes of the meeting of the meetings of the Northern Districts Civic Amenity Site Committee held on 25th May, and 10th August, 2023.

Mr. Cowell updated members on discussions with Bride Parish Commissioners; the Committee has been informed that the Commission wish to maintain the status quo.

Mr. Parker sought an update about the disposal of lithium batteries and plasterboard. The Town Clerk undertook to seek information from the Technical Services Manager about plasterboard but stated that there is a box provided for the disposal of lithium batteries.

(2023/24:184) Minutes Meeting Policy Committee:

Resolved: Following a proposal by Mr. Parker, seconded by Mr. Kelly and carried by 9 votes to 1, Mr. McGuinness voting against, to note and approve the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held on 9th October, 2023, and the policies presented therewith, with the exception of that concerning Flexible Working, which was not completed.

(2023/24:185) On-Going Matters “Action Tracker”:

Resolved: To note the “Action Tracker” to 11th October, 2023, subject to the following:-

Rate Arrears – Whilst not specifically a rate debt Mr. McGuinness queried action on a particular tenant in arrears of rent – the Town Clerk undertook to prompt the Housing and Property Manager on this matter.

Mr. Cowell commented on the success in recovering some rate debt and noted that some of the larger debts have been referred to the Attorney General for action. He also referred to the inference, by Dr. Allinson of a Bill being presented to Tynwald. The Town Clerk undertook to contact Dr. Allinson to determine if any further information was required from the Commissioners.

Kerbside Recycling – Miss Craine asked for an update on this matter. The Town Clerk indicated that we are struggling to obtain costs. Miss Craine suggested advice be sought from Douglas Council.

(2023/24:186) On-Going Matters - Register of Ruinous Property, Unightly Land and Buildings:

Resolved: To note the “Register of Ruinous Property ..” to 11th October, 2023, subject to the following:-

10/11 West Quay – Members noted that Notice had been served on the owners by the Coroner for Middle and since that a dangerous coping stone has been removed. It is hoped that the owners’ plans for these premises might be available for reporting to the November meeting.

“The Holly”, Grove Mount – resolved: That following a proposal by Mr. Parker, seconded by Mr. Cowell and agreed nem con, notice be served on the executors of the estate of the late owner of this property to address some of the concerns.

Victoria Mall – it was proposed by Miss Craine, seconded by Mr. McGuinness and agreed nem con that discussions be recommenced with the owner of these properties.

Finance and General Purposes:

(2023/24:187) Town Clerk's Report – Boundary Extension:

Discussion ensued concerning the Town Clerk's report dated 9th October, 2023, updating members on the status of the proposal to extend the Town Boundary subsequent to the pre-Inquiry held on 2nd October, 2023. Mr. Parker proposed that the Town Clerk and the Commissioners' Advocates being the main speakers; Mr. McGuinness commented that it had been decided in September and seconded the proposal; he felt it would do the Commission no favours if members spoke.

The Town Clerk referred to the Notice of Motion, dated 9th October, 2023, standing in the name of Mr. R. Cowell concerning the appointment of a special Committee to formulate the Commission's case.

Mr. Cowell proposed an amendment that the Advocate, Mr. M. Jelski, the Town Clerk and himself as Deputy Chairman attend so that there is political representation. This was seconded by Mr. Parker and carried by 9 votes to 1, Mr. Court voting against.

(2023/24:188) Finance Officer's Report:

Resolved: To note Finance Officer's report dated 11th October, 2023, subject to the following:-

Bank Balances: the Lead Member informed members monies due from Treasury for approved borrowings had not yet been received.

Rent Arrears – members were informed about the following debtors listed with the appendix to the Finance Officer's report; viz:-

No. 2 – the tenant is not engaging with officers or others trying to assist.

No 16 – probable that this debt will need to be written off for accounting purposes;

No 23 – officers now have an address and can progress attempts to recover the debt.

Mr. Kelly queried a tenant against whom legal action was pending – members were informed that this referred to breaches of the tenancy agreement rather than rent debt.

Aged Debtors – members were informed that the total debt listed within this appendix to the Finance Officer's report had reduced considerably since the reporting date, not least by the payment of the largest debt listed.

Mr. McGuinness reminded members of the decision taken last month to present rent arrears and aged debtors on an "exception basis".

(2023/24:189) Technical Assistant's Report – Fixed Penalty Notices Appeal:

Members considered the Technical Assistant's report dated 9th October, 2023, advising of and detailing appeals submitted against Fixed Penalty Notices issued in respect of perceived littering offences, resulting in the following:-

Penalty Notice 0736 – proposed by Mr. Parker, seconded by Mr. Kelly and agreed by 8 votes to 2 that the appeal be accepted – Miss Craine and Mr. Cowell voted against.

Penalty Notice 0650 – proposed by Mr. Parker, seconded by Mr. Beighton and agreed nem con that the appeal be accepted.

Penalty Notice 0689 – proposed by Miss Craine, seconded by Mr. Beighton that the appeal be rejected. The proposal failed by 9 votes to 1, only Miss Craine voting with her proposal.

Works and Development:

(2023/24:190) Town Clerk's Report – Department of Infrastructure Highway Maintenance Charter:

Members considered the Town Clerk's report dated 11th October, 2023, with appended correspondence and the final version of the Highway Maintenance Service Level Agreement. Discussion ensued members expressed concern at the inference that local authorities could hand back responsibilities to the Department and also queried whether further clarification on the agreement was required.

Members felt it beneficial to continue with the agreement in the short-term but expressed wariness should neighbouring authorities decide to hand back the service.

Resolved: That following a proposal by Mr. Kelly, seconded by Mr. Beighton, and agreed nem con, the agreement in terms of the Phase 1 of the phases specified within the letter dated 18th September, 2023, from the Head of Highways and Asset Management be signed. Members particularly noted from the correspondence that “your authority signing the SLA does not commit the Las to implementing the SLA. At this stage you are only confirming that you agree with the service standards identified in the SLA.”

Housing and Property:

(2023/24.191:) Minutes Housing Committee:

Resolved: To note and approve the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Committee held on 3rd October, 2023, subject to the following:-

Clause 24 – the Lead Member explained the reasons for seeking legal opinion on these cases of breaches of tenancy agreement.

Clause 29 - the Lead Member informed members that the number of applicants on the housing waiting lists had gone down.

(2023/24:192) Housing and Property Manager's Report – Cronk Elfin Refurbishment Update:

Resolved: To note the Housing and Property Manager's report dated 10th October, 2023, providing an update on the refurbishment works progressing at Cronk Elfin.

It was proposed by Mr. Singer and agreed by consensus that Standing Orders be suspended to allow the meeting to continue to its conclusion.

(2023/24:193) Housing and Property Manager's Report – Housing Association:

Resolved: To note the Housing and Property Manager's report dated 10th October, 2023, concerning proposal presented by the Department of Infrastructure with regard to wish of the Council of Ministers to explore the establishment of a Housing Association in the Isle of Man.

Members expressed various concerns at the lack of detail provided so far which left many unanswered questions. Mr. Singer suggested that the Commission's concerns be passed to the Members of the House of Keys for Ramsey. The Deputy Town Clerk advised members of his understanding that the matter was on the October Tynwald Agenda, [which sat on 17th October]. Members agreed that this matter required careful monitoring.

Parks and Leisure:

(2023/24:194) Technical Services Manager's Report – Insurance Claim...

Members considered the Technical Services Manager's report dated 9th October, 2023, advising of receipt of an insurance claim from Loss Adjusters on behalf of a client.

Resolved: That the report be noted and no further action be taken other than referring the matter to and following the directive of the Commission's insurers, who it is understood may wish to bring in the services of a loss adjuster.

(2023/24:195) Notices of Motion:

195 a) Notice of Motion Creation of Special Committee:

Mr. Cowell proposed and presented his notice of motion dated 9th October, 2023, concerning the setting up of a Special Committee comprising of 2 or 3 members with regard to the Commission's wish to extend the Town Boundary to ensure the Commission had strong political representation at the forthcoming Inquiry. Mr. Kelly seconded the proposal.

The proposal was put to the vote and carried by 9 votes to 1, Miss Craine voting against. Further discussion ensued during which Mr. McGuinness queried if the Committee were for this specific purpose or would it have an ongoing remit. As a result Mr. McGuinness proposed that the resolution be expanded to reflect that the “Special Committee” be the Policy Committee and the remit of the committee be expanded to include consideration of wider development of the town. This addition was seconded by Miss Craine and agreed nem con.

195 b) Notice of Motion – Provision of Disabled Parking Spaces Mooragh Park:

Mr. Cowell presented his notice of motion dated 9th October, 2023, concerning his wish to see designated parking spaces in the vicinity of the “Costa” Café in the Mooragh Park.

Discussion ensued with regard to various aspects of the suggesting – child safety, enforcement, need for new / adequate signage/ problematic consequences for deliveries. A proposal was put by Mr. Singer, seconded by Miss Craine that no further action be taken in the matter.

An amendment was put by Mr. Beighton, seconded by Mr. Court and agreed by 9 votes to 1, Mr. Singer voting against, that the matter be referred to the Lead and Deputy Lead Members for Parks and Leisure to progress this matter in liaison with the Technical Services Manager, who has already been requested to look into this matter.

Any Other Business:

(2023/24:196) Town Clerk’s Report – Station Road Car Park Lease:
(Recorded in Private)

(2023/24:197) “Fill a Fish” Bottle Recycling:

Miss Craine referred to the “Fill-a-Fish” wired bottle recycling equipment situated in the middle of the Mooragh Promenade and queried if it could be moved to a more sheltered location. Members were reminded that a previous request to identify another location had resulted in no suggesting being forthcoming.

Resolved: That following a proposal by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Mr. Beighton and agreed nem con, that the recycling unit be relocated further south along the promenade opposite the Swimming Pool.

(2023/24:198) Distance Markers – Mooragh Promenade:

Mr. Court informed members that the distance markers along the Mooragh Promenade had been vandalised and asked if they could be replaced.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed members that this is being arranged.




Matters of Establishment:

(2023/24:199) Minutes Establishment Committee:

Resolved: That following a proposal by Mr. Cowell, seconded by Mr. Parker and agreed nem con, the minutes of the meetings of the Establishment Committee held on 6th September, 2023, and 5th October, 2023, be approved.

The meeting closed at 10.37 p.m. giving a time of 4 hours for the payment of attendance allowances.

Chairman.



Robert Cowell.
Deputy Chairman.

15/11/23.