

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, 19th July, 2023, at 7.00 p.m.

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

Apologies for absence Mr. F. B. R. Williams and Revd Canon N. D. Greenwood who has been granted leave of absence.

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

(2023/24:068) Minutes:

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 21st June, 2023, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

(2023/24:069) Matters Arising:

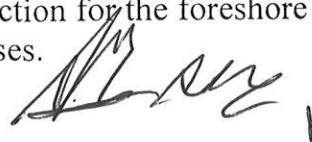
The following matters, not specifically appearing within the Agenda were raised by members:

Clause 038 – South Foreshore – Mr. Singer again referred to the cleanliness and malodorous nature of the South foreshore and made reference to the frequent removal of seaweed in Douglas and asked that the Commission do the same in Ramsey.

Clause 041 - ...Consultation Low Value Coinage – Mr. Singer referred to the Board's submission to the consultation and asked if a response from Government had been received and if the Commission's comments could be conveyed for reporting to the media. The Town Clerk advised that there had been no response to the Commission's submission and he could see no reason why the details thereof could not be conveyed to the media.

Clause 052 – Car Parks – Mr. Singer queried the response of the Department of Infrastructure engineers on the condition of the surfacing of Station Road Car Park and that on the Mooragh Estate. The Technical Services Manager informed members that she had met the Department's engineer whose response is that the micro-asphalt is not the best nor the worst that he has seen; the surface will start healing but may mark elsewhere; the alternative to replace would be a full tar-macadam surface at a cost of approximately £500,000. Mr. Singer contended that the surface is dangerous and queried, despite the 2-year warranty, who would put the surface right? The Town Clerk advised that he would need to look more fully into the contract.

Mr. McGuinness referred to Mr. Singer's comments with regard to seaweed and queried what could be done and queried press releases? The Town Clerk advised that we could discuss action for the foreshore with DEFA and could see no problem with issuing press releases.



(2023/24:069) Matters Arising continued:

Mr. McGuinness then suggested that whilst he and other members submitted Notices of Motion and/ or formal propositions, Mr. Singer's requests seemed to be being progressed without either. Mr. Singer as a result formally proposed that the south foreshore be cleaned in seconding Mr. Cowell asked that the wording be amended to reflect when considered necessary.

Miss Craine referred to the foreshore at Port Erin, which has lots of seaweed, she stated that she had not noticed any smells and was unaware of any complaints about that beach either about seaweed or smells. The indigenous plants are part of a beach.

Mr. Kelly stated that weed used to be cleared each morning and could see no harm in so doing and therefore proposed an amendment Mr. Kelly that beach cleaning be looked into. Mr. McGuinness commented that it had not been defined how often, no costs are known and suggested that the amendment be adapted to that the Commission investigate the matter. Mr. Court suggested that the matter be looked into having regard to the opinions of DEFA, the Manx Wildlife Trust and the Swimming Groups. Mr. Young referred to nesting birds commenting that nesting sites had occurred because of lack of clearing the beach – the beach needs clearing at least once each week.

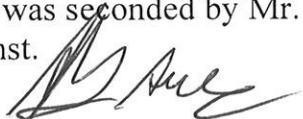
Mr. Kelly stated that he was happy to reword his amendment – that feasibility and costs of beach cleaning be investigated, and the Town Clerk report back. Mr. Parker seconded the amendment.

A further amendment was put by Miss Craine, seconded by Mr. Court that in addition to Mr. Kelly's amendment advice on the impact of clearing / cleaning be sought from DEFA and the MWLT. This amendment was put to the vote and carried 6 votes to 4 Messrs. Beighton, Cowell, McGuinness and Young voted against.

Clause 049 - ...Ramsey Sprintfest – Mr. Kelly referred to the survey or social media and proposed that the survey be further promoted and also drawn to the attention of the media. Mr. Cowell seconded the proposal.

Discussion ensued Mr. Parker commenting that media advertising is not free; Mr. Singer commenting that media attention should be reflected as a "news release". Miss Craine proposed an amendment that the Commission should vote on whether matters should be brought to the specific attention of the media. Mr. McGuinness seconded the amendment. Mr. Singer suggested the need of a "mechanism" to determine what matters to bring to the attention of the media. Mr. McGuinness commented that access to information is greater than it ever has been. Members were in agreement that the public should be aware of matters. The Town Clerk suggested that he submit a report on options that include the facility to bring matters to the attention of the media.

A further amendment was put by Mr. Oldham that the Town Clerk report further. This was seconded by Mr. Cowell and carried by 9 votes to 1, Miss Craine voting against.



Matters for Information:

(2023/24:070) Action Tracker July, 2023:

Resolved: To note the “Action Tracker” to 13th July, 2023, subject to the following and accepting that some matters may be referred to within other Clauses of these minutes:-

Mooragh Promenade Shelter – Public Art – in response to a query from Mr. McGuinness the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed he had been in contact with the School’s Head of Art about completion of the work.

Ramsey South Promenade Changing Huts – Mr. Kelly reported on submission of a plan of the proposed changing hut and proposed that the plans be approved subject to costings being provided. Mr. Cowell seconded the proposal. The proposal was put to the vote and carried by 8 votes to 2 Miss Craine and Mr. McGuinness voting against.

Mooragh Park Shelters Public Art – in response to a query from Mr. Cowell the Deputy Town Clerk explained the delays in this matter in that approval to the scheme needed to be in place prior to additional quotations being sought. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the grant had now been awarded

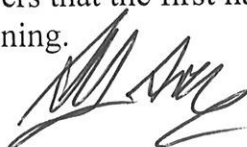
Seagulls in Mooragh Park – Mr. Cowell queried the provision of bunting suggested as a deterrent. The Technical Services Manager confirmed that the bunting is on order but that the delivery date cannot be confirmed.

(2023/24:071) Action Tracker Budget Approved and Proposed Projects:

Resolved: To note the Action Tracker of Budget Approved projects at 13th July, 2023 and that for proposals for 2023/24, subject to the following:-

Toilets Millenium Garden – Mr. Cowell referred to comments by the Chamber of Commerce suggesting that the proposals be repositioned by 90^o to afford greater privacy. The Housing and Property Manager reminded members that been asked to comment on the proposals prior to submission of the plans, an amended to the planning application would be required and the design is considered beneficial for use.

Festoon Lighting – in response to a query from Mr. Cowell the Technical Services Manager informed members that the first half of the festoon lighting had been replaced the previous evening.



Finance and General Purposes:

(2023/24:072) Finance Officer's General Report:

Resolved: To note and approve the Finance Officer's general report dated 12th July, 2023, subject to the following:-

Mr. Cowell, in his capacity as Lead Member, drew attention to the larger payments of rates and loan debts.

Works and Development:

(2023/24:073) Town Clerk's Report – Update – Powers Relating to Dilapidated Buildings:

Resolved: To note the Town Clerk's report dated 3rd July, 2023, updating members on the powers available with regard to Compulsory Purchase of property.

Mr. McGuinness proposed, and Mr. Kelly seconded that the item in Private comprising the Technical Services Manager's Report "Ruinous Properties" be brought into public at this point. The voting was split 5:5 Miss Craine and Messrs Court, Kelly, McGuinness and Parker voting for. The Chairman permitted the matter to be considered.

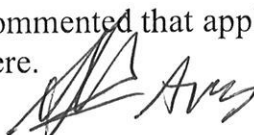
(2023/24:074) Technical Services Manager's Report – Ruinous Properties:

In considering the Technical Services Manager's report Mr. McGuinness referred to the need to deal with such matters fairly and consistently and therefore proposed that a Policy be agreed and if appropriate a budget level determined to ensure a clear public stance with regard to ruinous properties.

The proposal was seconded by Mr. Cowell and agreed unanimously.

(2023/24:075) Town Clerk's Report – Weekend and Overnight Parking in Residential Areas:

Members considered the Town Clerk's report dated 4th July, 2023, advising that the Commissioners' view are sought with regard to regulation of overnight and weekend vehicle parking. The Town Clerk suggested that the Commission might wish to consider the matter in detail at a special meeting and / or consider establishing a policy for the Town. Mr. Parker referred to the matter having been raised several years ago and the Commission had agreed it was not feasible for the town to implement restrictions; the problems did not overly affect Ramsey and he felt this was still the case. Mr. Oldham commented that applying restrictions only resulted in motorhomes moving elsewhere.



(2023/24:075) Town Clerk's Report – Weekend and Overnight Parking in Residential Areas:

A proposal was put by Mr. Cowell seconded by Mr. Beighton that a special meeting be called. An amendment was put by Mr. Parker that the Commission do nothing. This was seconded by Mr. McGuinness with the addition that the Department be informed that in seeking the views of the Commission they are absolving themselves from any responsibility.

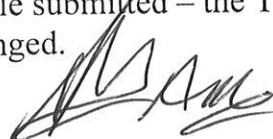
Mr. Singer proposed a further amendment that the Commission give a straight forward response as to why they do not wish to make recommendations but exclude the caveat suggested by Mr. McGuinness. This amendment was seconded by Mr. Young and, being the last amendment tabled was put to the vote and carried by 6 votes to 4. Miss Craine and Messrs. Beighton, Cowell and Kelly voting against.

(2023/24:076) Technical Services Manager's Report - Planning Applications:

Resolved: To note the Technical Services Manager's Report dated 11th July, 2023, May, 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:	4090
P.A. NO.:	<u>23/00744/B</u>
PROPOSED:	Full approval for a residential development comprising up to 153 dwellings and community uses with associated highway and pedestrian access and infrastructure, drainage, landscaping and public open space together with approval in principle for a primary school on land at Vollan Fields together with enhancement of existing habitat on land to the east of Royal Park
NOTES:	P.A. in Detail
SITE:	Land At Vollan Field No's 131042, 131043, 135315 and 135318 Land East of Royal Park Field No's 131085 and 135140 Andreas Road Ramsey

Members discussed the above application. Miss Craine asked about the Environmental Consultants findings and report – the Technical Services Manager advised that she had only recently received a few days earlier and had not had time to go through the numerous documents. The Town Clerk advised the proposals included a wildlife area and there will be a mitigation measure included. Mr. Kelly asked if any complaints had been made about flooding – the Town Clerk responded that all new developments need a flood risk assessment. Mr. Beighton queried if there are any changes to the application in principle submitted – the Technical Services Manager advised that the layout has changed.



(2023/24:076) Technical Services Manager's Report - Planning Applications Continued:

Mr. Cowell advised that he has been approached with regard to the flood risk and reference has been made to the lack of infrastructure and it has been suggested that the proposals are over-intensive.

Mr. Kelly proposed that the developers be invited to present their proposals at an open meeting with the public and to which the members of the House of Keys for Ramsey will be invited to answer questions about the services available or needed to support the development. Miss Craine queried a previous public consultation. The Town Clerk reminded members that the developers had staged a public exhibition at the Town Hall and had in addition held an open day. The Technical Services Manager confirmed that a report of the consultations has been included in the papers included with the application.

Mr. McGuinness queried how Mr. Kelly's proposal would impact the planning process? The Deputy Town Clerk informed members that the Commission could request, with no guarantee of acceptance, a deferral of consideration by the Planning Committee. Mr. McGuinness commented on the need to inform the public of the proposals he expressed concern about the access road over the Stone Bridge and suggested that an observation about this and traffic and services be submitted as an observation. Mr. Kelly seconded Mr. McGuinness's proposal

Mr. Cowell proposed an amendment that the Commission make an observation extending Mr. McGuinness's concerns to include the infrastructure, flood risk and the need to include binding conditions for the provision of a nursery and playing fields. This amendment was seconded by Mr. Beighton, put to the vote and carried by 6 votes to 4 – Miss Craine and Messrs. Court, McGuinness and Young voting against.

Appendix:

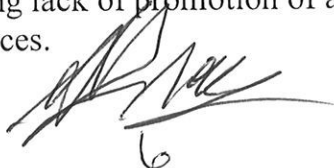
No comments were made on the Appendix.

Parks and Leisure:

(2023/24:077) Town Clerk's Report – Consultation Heritage Railway Independent Review and Economic Impact Assessment:

Member considered the Town Clerk's Report dated 3rd July, 2023, advising of receipt of a review of the Heritage Railway on the Island being undertaken by "Systra" The report included the questions put within the review.

The Deputy Town Clerk verbally reported on a meeting he attended on 18th July, 2023, main points arising being lack of promotion of and lack of local knowledge about tickets for railway services.



(2023/24:077) Town Clerk's Report – Consultation Heritage Railway Independent Review and Economic Impact Assessment Continued:

Mr. Beighton referred to rumours circulating that it was proposed to stop the MER Service at Laxey. The Deputy Town Clerk responded that this was not in the terms of reference nor had it been mentioned at the review he attended.

Resolved: That, following a proposal by Mr. Beighton, seconded by Mr. Singer and agreed without division that assurances be sought with regard to the continuation of the MER Service to Ramsey.

A further proposal was put by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Miss Craine and agreed by 8 votes to 2, Messrs. Cowell and Singer voting against, that the Commission write formally in response to the consultation conveying their belief that the MER Service to Ramsey is of financial and cultural benefit to the Town and having lost the steam railway service the Town cannot lose this as well.

(2023/24:078) Deputy Town Clerk's Report – Christmas Events:

Members considered the Deputy Town Clerk's report dated 13th July, 2023, advising of proposed events to be organised during the festive season 2023.

Resolved: That following a proposal by Mr. Court, seconded by Mr. Parker and agreed unanimously that the Commission reinstate a "Christmas Lights Event" on 25th November, 2023, and "Ramsey in Bling" possibly with sponsorship or with a partner and agree in principle to the organisation of Christmas Grotto for which volunteers will be required.

(2023/24:079) . Deputy Town Clerk's Report – Shennaghys Jiu 2024:

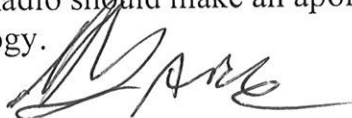
Members considered the Deputy Town Clerk's report dated 12th July, 2023, advising of request made by Shennaghys Jiu for logistical support for their Festival to be staged between 28th and 31st March, 2024, by way of use of the Town Hall and implementation of a road closing order.

Resolved: That, following a proposal by Mr. Court seconded by Mr. Parker and agreed unanimously the support requested be provided.

Any Other Business:

(2023/24:080) Sundry Matters:

080a) Tynwald Day – Mr. Kelly referred to Manx Radio having referred to the incorrect Chairman of the Commission at the 2023 Tynwald Ceremony and expressed the view that Manx Radio should make an apology and write to the Chairman conveying such apology.



80b) Meeting with Members of the House of Keys for Ramsey – Mr. Cowell referred to the routine meeting with the Members of the House of Keys for Ramsey and queried the timing of the next meeting. The Town Clerk confirmed that the meeting is overdue and that he would schedule it with the MHK's and advise members accordingly.

It was proposed by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Mr. Parker and agreed by 6 votes to 4 that the Town Clerk's report entitled "Climate Change Fund – Electric Refuse Collection Vehicles, included within the Private Agenda be brought into public. Messrs. Cowell, Kelly, Oldham and Singer voted against.

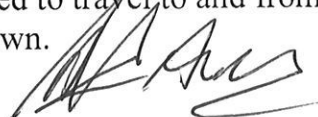
(2023/24:081) Climate Change Fund – Electric Refuse Collection Vehicles:

The Town Clerk introduced the report advising that applications have been made for contributions from the Climate Change Fund for the provision of Street Lighting and Solar Panelling. The proposal for funding towards electric refuse collection vehicles will provide the cost of the difference between a diesel and an electric vehicle and it is probable that the application would be required to be considered by the Council of Ministers. Mr. Young queried if the Commissioners would be "guinea pigs" for use of an electric refuse vehicle on the Island – the Town Clerk stated he thought so. Mr. Singer queried the lifespan of refuse wagons and was informed 7 to 8 years.

A proposal by Mr. McGuinness that the Commission submit the application for Climate Fund Grant was seconded by Miss Craine, Mr. McGuinness emphasising the involvement of the Council of Ministers might assist the Commission in gaining access to the fund. Mr. Cowell agreed stating that the application might force the hand of the COM to make all or some of the funding applied for available. Miss Craine commented that Government must be made aware that local authorities are under pressure and any Government debate would be welcome.

Mr. Singer commented that he felt the Commission's application would open the flood gates and their belief that funding would be made available to them was foolish, he referred to local authorities in Cardiff cancelling their order for electric refuse vehicle and reverting to leasing diesel vehicles which are Euro 6 compliant. He stated that the Commission would know more at the "life-end" of the new vehicles and at which time the cost should be less than it is now.

Miss Craine commented that the Fund is there to be used; Mr. Cowell commented that we should ask Government to "put their money where their mouth is". The Technical Services Manager commented that the current refuse vehicle is Euro 6 compliant and that there are considerable infrastructure costs involved in the provision of electric vehicles. Mr. Kelly queried how long a charge would last and if an electric vehicle would have the power when fully loaded to travel to and from the refuse from waste site – the response to both was not known.



(2023/24:081) Climate Change Fund – Electric Refuse Collection Vehicles Continued:

An amendment by Mr. Singer that the Commission consider the purchase or lease of a diesel vehicle was seconded by Mr. Young. This was put to the vote and failed by 7 votes to 3, with only Mr. Oldham being in further support.

The original proposal was then put and was carried by 7 votes to 3 – Messrs. Oldham, Singer and Young voting against.

(2023/24:082) Further Sundry Matters:

082a) RNLI 200 Anniversary – Mr. Court reported that he had been approached by Ms T Shammon on behalf of RNLI. The organisation will be celebrating the 200th Anniversary of its formation and as part of the programme of events have asked if a commemorative flower bed can be provided in the Mooragh Park for which the RNLI will provide a design and assist with planting.

Resolved: That following a proposition by Mr. Court seconded by Mr. Cowell and agreed unanimously the request be agreed in principle.

082b) Charity Run and Swim – Mr. Court reported a request made by a local group “Morning Momentum” to hold a charity Fun Run and Dip based on the South Foreshore and in aid of “Isle Listen” and therefore seeking the Commission’s permission.

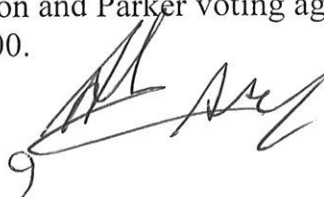
Resolved: That following a proposal by Mr. Court, seconded by Miss Craine that permission be granted. The proposal was carried unanimously.

082c) Christian Street – Mr. McGuinness sought an update on suggestions within the Department of Infrastructure’s Area Plan that Christian Street be redesignated “One Way”. The Town Clerk informed members of his understanding that this matter is “on the radar” but he will seek an update from the Department.

(2023/24:083) Telephone Kiosk Courthouse Grounds:

The Town Clerk informed members that the Commission has been offered the opportunity to purchase the disused telephone kiosk situated at the Courthouse Grounds for £1.00. The kiosk is a registered structure and does need some work to the door-strap and glass which Manx Telecom would undertake. The kiosk requires paintwork which the Commission will require to undertake. Members were reminded of the Commission’s wish to acquire the kiosk to site a defibrillator.

Resolved: That following a proposal by Mr. Cowell seconded by Mr. Young and agreed by 8 votes to 2, Messrs. Beighton and Parker voting against, that the kiosk be purchased at the requested sum of £1.00.



(2023/24:084) Use of Social Media – Complaints:

Mr. Cowell informed members of social media comments made and proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to permit the matter to be discussed. The proposal was seconded by Mr. Kelly and carried by 6 votes to 4 – Miss Craine and Messrs. Court, McGuinness and Parker.

Mr. Cowell referred to recent social media postings made by Miss Craine which contained unsuitable language and which he could not condone and therefore moved that a vote of no confidence in Miss Craine be taken.

Miss Craine commented that her remarks were made on her private social media page and queried any difference to other correspondence “which would appear to have been ‘squashed’”. The Town Clerk informed members that the correspondence to which Miss Craine alluded had been discussed with the Police and it had not been appropriate to pass it on. He added that Miss Craine’s comments had been very much in the public domain and complaints had been received about them.

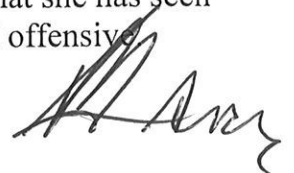
Mr. Cowell added that a Code of Conduct was needed – the actions of Commissioners have ramifications whether in public or in the private domain.

Miss Craine commented that she considered the language she used to be acceptable and had received support via social media. She felt the words do not hide the problem – which she considers are due to her beliefs – she stated the language was part of a private exchange with another person repetition of them was likened to “eavesdropping”..

Mr. Cowell commented that because Commissioners cannot be reprimanded as such and that Miss Craine has made no full apology and if she is not apologetic there is no other choice than to take a vote of no confidence.

Reference was made to the lack of guidance to members. The Town Clerk reminded members that they are all supplied with extracts of “Codes of Conduct in Local Government” upon election; the Department of Infrastructure in 2022 produced an updated “Handbook” for Members and Officers and undertook to bring this to members attention. Reference is made within this about bringing an authority into disrepute. He also stated that the “Vote of No Confidence” was not recognised as any official sanction against a member, who was still entitled to be a member and attend meetings.

Mr. Court queried if an audit of all members’ social media accounts for the past 2 ½ years should be undertaken. Mr. Kelly referred to the social media training provided at which only 3 members were present. Miss Craine commented that she has seen other matters on members’ social media which could be considered offensive



(2023/24:084) Use of Social Media – Complaints:

Mr. Singer made an impassioned appeal to Miss Craine to make a full apology – there was no excuse for her posting it had been widely read and the language used was extreme, offensive and reflected on others bringing the Board into disrepute – Miss Craine's posted apology with a caveat which had he felt worsened the situation. He stated all constituents should be treated with respect.

Mr. Court referred to the good work undertaken by Miss Craine for the Commission at the Christmas Grotto and the Picnic in the Park, he commented that posting "had a short shelf-life" and people should be judged on their deeds not their words.

Mr. McGuinness proposed an amendment that the vote of no confidence be extended to any member who has a criminal conviction during the "life" of this Board. Mr. Kelly seconded the amendment. The Town Clerk commented that these matters do not fall foul of legislation but it is more how members felt.

Miss Craine commented that should the vote of no confidence go against her – she will go ahead as she now does and not change.

The amendment was put and failed by 6 votes to 3 – Miss Craine and Messrs. Court and McGuinness voting for.

The proposal of the Vote of No Confidence was put and carried by 6 votes to 4, Miss Craine and Messrs. Court, McGuinness and Parker voting against.

(2023/24:085) Deferral of Meeting

It was proposed by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Mr. Kelly and agreed by 9 votes to 1, Mr. Parker voting against that consideration of the private business within the agenda be deferred.

The Town Clerk did ask for one further item to be conducted this evening, viz:

(2023/24:086) Presentation:

The opportunity was taken to make a presentation to Mrs. Chrystal to commemorate the occasion of her having completed 50 years employment with the Commission. Mrs. Chrystal thanked the members for their kindness in making the presentation and for the Town Clerk's kind remarks..

The Chairman closed the meeting which stands deferred to a date to be notified at 9.45 p.m., giving a time for the payment of attendance allowances of 3 hours.

Chairman.

