

**MINUTES OF ISLE OF MAN MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION MONTHLY MEETING  
HELD AT BRADDAN COMMISSIONERS' OFFICES AT 7PM ON THURSDAY 28  
SEPTEMBER 2017**

Alison Lynch	Marown Commissioners	Vice Chairman
Robert Moughtin	Garff Commissioners	President
Andrew Jessopp	Braddan Commissioners	
Neal Mellon	Braddan Commissioners	
Raina Chatel	Douglas Borough Council	
Betty Quirk	Douglas Borough Council	
Bob Pilling	Malew Commissioners	
James Cherry	Onchan Commissioners	
Geoff Gelling	Patrick Commissioners	
Lindsay Ridley	Patrick Commissioners	
Alan Jones	Peel Commissioners	
Andy Cowie	Ramsey Commissioners	
Juan McGuinness	Ramsey Commissioners	
Graham Connor	Secretary	

**1. Welcome**

In the absence of the Chairman Alison Lynch welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that a short silence be held in memory of Ian Lowey, Clerk to Arbory Commissioners, who had recently passed away. The order of service from the memorial service held at Arbory Parish Church was circulated. The Secretary had represented the Municipal Association.

**2. Speaker – Alfred Cannan M.H.K.**

The Treasury Minister offered his thanks for being given the opportunity to speak at the Municipal Association meeting this evening. He would offer an overview on current financial issues and then take questions from the floor.

Mr Cannan said that the time for looking back was over. It had been ten years since the Island had been hit with changes to VAT provision and despite this and the regressive international economic situation he found much confidence in the Island. He considered there to be three key elements going forward:

- 1) The need to grow and build on economic success but with a greater focus on sustainable jobs
- 2) The need to present a clear and transparent picture of public finances. Alongside this there had to be reassurance that deficit issues were being addressed.
- 3) Steps needed to be taken to give people confidence in the Island and its government.

Expanding on these elements Mr Cannan was clear that we needed to look at cost of living and wealth gap issues here on the Isle of Man and compare this with the situation in the United Kingdom and further afield. He said that the significant increase in personal income tax allowance in the last budget was an example of one way in which these issues were being addressed. He added that this coupled with increases in children's allowances, and reversal of the policy on free TV licences for over 75s demonstrated the desire to

support families on the Island. Similarly, he understood concerns regarding fuel prices and the general direction of travel in utilities costs and government announcements on these matters should be expected very shortly. Mr Cannan went on to talk about a range of associated issues. These were:

- Living and minimum wage.
- Tax cap. The level needed to be looked at again and HNW individuals needed to be integrated into our society.
- Encouraging new companies and ensuring effective use of start-up costs and grant packages available whilst at the same time support established local firms and recognising the important role of manufacturing within our economy.

When looking at maintaining and ensuring sustainable finances Mr Cannan said that a five-year plan was in place details of which could be found on the government website and there was also a need to make “pink book” details easier to understand for the electorate as a whole, not just those with specialist financial knowledge. The Minister confirm that the current deficit of around £85m was being largely covered by interest on reserves, hence there was little erosion of capital. In addition, Treasury had sought to recover £32m through spending controls. Clearly the ongoing issue regarding the Public Sector Pension Fund remained with current projections indicating that this would run out by 2025. Government was well advanced in preparing to tackle this and further announcements should be expected shortly.

Mr Cannan concluded by reminding Members about the SAVE initiative which had received over 1000 contributions from the public. Local Authorities were welcome to submit ideas through this portal.

There were a significant number of questions from the floor. The topics raised included:

- Health Service spending and budgets.
- Rate reform.
- Transfer of services to Local Authority control and financial implications.
- Plastic tax - going beyond the carrier bag issue.
- Balance between raising revenue by increasing the higher rate tax band or raising prescription charges on pensioners. The Minister wished to make it absolutely clear that he did not consider increasing tax rates to be part of increasing the revenue stream.
- Growing the Island population and changing demographics.
- Novel ideas for diversification and looking for niche markets e.g. cannabis oil in medical treatment.
- Implications of credit rating downgrades.
- Gas pipeline.
- Living wage levels.

Members thanked Mr Cannan for his position, open and frank exchange of views. All agreed that this had been a very worthwhile session.

### **3. Apologies for absence.**

Apologies for absence had been received from Vivian Quane (Chairman – Lezayre), Adrian Cowin (Arbory), Carol Malarkey (Douglas), Alex Toohey (Marown), Eddie Convery (Peel),

Michelle Haywood (Port St Mary) and Peter Gunn (Rushen). Members wished to record best wishes to the Chairman for a speedy recovery following her recent eye surgery.

**4. Minutes of July 2017 meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Vice Chairman.

**5. Matters arising from minutes**

Betty Quirk reported that following attendance by the DOI Minister at the last meeting some progress had been made in resolving urgent road marking and pothole issues mentioned although it was recognised that there was still a way to go with a lengthy list.

**6. Treasurer's Report**

The report had been circulated and was noted.

**7. Appointment of auditor**

Following the sad loss of Ian Lowey, it was necessary for the Municipal Association to appoint a new auditor. With that in mind the Chairman had asked the Secretary to approach Norman Cannell, Finance Officer at Ramsey Town Commissioners, to see if he might be prepared to take on this honorary role. Mr Cannell has advised that he would be willing to carry out this function provided that there were no more suitably qualified candidates and that his employer had no objection – he is FCCA qualified.

Andy Cowie asked what the role involved and was advised that this comprised audit of the annual accounts prepared by the Treasurer. There were no more than 50 underlying transactions in any twelve-month period, so this was not a particularly onerous task, and Mr Cannell expected to carry out this worked outside his normal office hours. The President advised that he had found Mr Cannell to be a helpful and diligent officer whenever he had dealt with him, and Ramsey Commissioners present concurred.

A motion proposing the appointment of Mr Cannell was unanimously carried, and it was agreed that the Secretary would write to him accordingly. **AP Secretary.**

**8. Secretary's Report**

The report had been circulated and was noted.

**9. Training events for Commissioners and Clerks**

The final training session of 2017 was scheduled for 17 October at the Noble's Park Community room starting at 6.30pm. The speaker would be Mike Williamson and the topic was safeguarding. It was anticipated that this would last around 2 hours including a break. Members were again asked to bring contributions towards the "faith supper" buffet which had been such a successful part of previous training sessions.

**10. Richmond Hill Consultative Committee.**

Alan Jones reported that despite having made Freedom of Information requests he was still short of some detail and thus not in a position to provide a full report. It was anticipated that this would be done in time for the October Municipal Association meeting. There was a brief discussion surrounding the current status of the committee. Whilst Ministers and senior Civil Servants had made it clear that they saw RHCC as "dead in the water" Members felt that

there still needed to be some sort of Local Authority centred regulatory function and monitoring body in place.

#### **11. Waste Management issues**

No further meetings of the Waste Management Group were scheduled until November. Minutes would be provided when available.

#### **12. Early and late season visitors – email from Director of Manx National Heritage**

Members considered the content of an e mail from Edmund Southworth, Director of Manx National Heritage regarding any assistance which could be given in maintain floral or other displays to add to the attraction of the Island for the increasing number of early and late season visitors. The Secretary reported that he had heard from Douglas Borough Council who had confirmed that the request had been passed to their Director of Environment and Regeneration for discussion with the Council's Head of Parks. Other present would seek to ensure that the request found its way to appropriate officers. The original e mail had already been circulated to Clerks. It was agreed that the Secretary would write back to Mr Southworth advising what had been decided. **AP Secretary.**

#### **13. World War I Commemorations**

There was nothing further to report at this moment in time.

#### **14. Any other business**

##### **a) Marine Drive signage**

Braddan Commissioners wished to congratulate Douglas Borough Council on the efforts which had been made to improve this.

##### **b) Planning committee composition**

Bob Pilling asked what progress had been made regarding the issue of representation of Local Authorities on planning committees as put forward by Mr Boot when he spoke to Members and sought feedback from them at the meeting in June. Bob felt that there needed to be a lead from the Municipal Association in this matter.

In discussion Members advised that consultation on the proposal had taken place at subsequent Local Authority meeting and that feedback had then been sent to Mr Boot and, in some cases, shared with Members. There was also concern that this proposal had been floated as a personal idea rather than something which might have real substance or result in widespread appetite for implementation.

It was agreed that the Secretary should write to Mr Boot asking for a summary of feedback given and some indication of next steps. **AP Secretary.**

##### **c) Conversion of public telephone boxes to public access defibrillator stations**

Geoff Gelling advised that he had produced a best practice guide to undertaking this process following the efforts of Patrick Commissioners in undertaking such a conversion. Members were impressed both by the concept and the way this had been put into practice. Paper copies of the guide were distributed and it was agreed that an electronic version would be forwarded to the Secretary. **AP Secretary to chase and distribute to Clerks.**

**d) Sustainable energy policy on the Island**

Lindsay Ridley asked if it might be possible for the Municipal Association to engage in dialogue with the appropriate MHK to put across the need for a more robust approach to be taken. Andy Cowie advised that discussions were currently ongoing at Senior level aimed at producing a fresh sustainable energy strategy and that it might be appropriate to delay such discussions until this had been produced. It was unclear whether the Municipal Association could have input into the strategy before this was produced. Nevertheless, any opportunity to engage should not be missed and this was an area where the Municipal Association could, and should have a voice.

**e) Zero Waste Mann**

The Secretary reported that he had received a request from Muriel Garland for a slot to speak to the Municipal Association on current issues and developments. Whilst Members had no objection they felt that there was an opportunity for such a speaker to reach a wider audience and wondered if it might be possible to arrange an event under the auspices of the current training programme. They asked if the Secretary could make appropriate enquiries. **AP Secretary.**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Date of next meeting: **Thursday 26 October 2017 at 7pm.**

Signed.....Chairman

Date.....