

22nd September



About me

I'm 29 and have lived on the Island for 17 years. Educated at Ramsey Grammar School I spent 4 years at University where I earned both my BSc and Masters degrees before coming back to the Island and qualifying as a Chartered Accountant. I currently work as a Manager at a local accountancy firm where my clients are a mix of local and international businesses.

I live in Ramsey with my wife and have had the privilege of serving as a Ramsey Town Commissioner for the last four years and in May this year was elected Chairman of the Commission.

VOTE 
LAWRIE HOOPER

I'm also part of the LibVan party because I firmly believe that only by working together can we drive the changes that need to be made.

The Island was an absolutely fantastic place to grow up and I want to make sure that it continues to be a great place to live



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LAWRIE HOOPER



Dear Constituent

Over the last five years the Island has seen significant changes to our public services, not all of them for the better.

It's the responsibility of our MHK's to stand by their principles and make decisions that are in the best interests of the Island, not just easy decisions.

Remember, your vote counts. If you want an MHK who will stand up and be heard then use your vote for me on the 22nd September.

Thank you for taking the time to read my manifesto

Lawrie Hooper

Pensions



Resolving the government's public sector pension deficit is unarguably the most important thing the next administration needs to address.

If we do nothing, then by 2020-21 the Pension Reserve will be empty and the Island will need to take £50 million from general revenue just to pay pensions in that year alone. This figure rises to £63 million in 2021-22 and will keep on rising.

The current government's plan is to keep drawing down on other reserves and hope that economic growth will pull us out of this situation.

Total "Net" government expenditure is around £565 million so this means by 2020 Economic growth needs to increase Government income by around **10%** to prevent cuts or taking money from general reserves. Clearly this is not realistic.

The pension scheme needs more money in, and less money out, which means increasing contributions and decreasing benefits. Current workers are already accepting these changes but it won't be enough by itself. Some of the cost must surely fall onto those already taking pensions, as well as the taxpayer – we're all going to have to share some of this burden together.

To address the long term deficit and make pensions sustainable changes need to be made:

- The current scheme needs to be closed, **freezing and protecting current benefits.**
- Transfer all workers to a new defined contribution scheme.

This is a complex process, and I've written about how this might be achieved on my website.

www.lhooperiom.com/public-sector-pensions

The most important thing is that any changes can't be imposed from above, there needs to be full consultation and support from those affected.

Education



Government needs to start looking at education as an investment and not as a cost. By investing in education we can ensure that we are providing everyone with a fair start in life, to help everyone reach their potential.

Class sizes are getting too large, and the availability of resources for children with additional needs has been reduced. It is only through more investment that we can help provide the next generation with a world class education.

Some things that I believe should be looked at by the next administration:

- Government should reintroduce tax relief on education covenants
- Financial assistance (i.e. grants and loans) should be available for more than just university – there needs to be more assistance for apprenticeships and more encouragement for the private sector to provide graduate schemes and apprenticeships.
- Introduce incentives for graduates to return to the Island to work so that we can retain their skills on Island.
- It's important that children leave school with real life skills. Not everything in life is about learning facts and figures and it is essential that young adults are fully prepared for the world outside school – learning how to manage their finances, excel at job interviews, give presentations and interact with the business world.
- Expand Government support for pre-school education to ensure that all children can attend a teacher led pre-school – and bring the regulation and oversight of pre-schools under the Department of Education.

The Economy



Government doesn't drive economic growth – it's the hard work of private businesses and innovative entrepreneurs that create jobs and bring money to our Island. What Government can do is create the right environment to encourage and support these efforts.

With Brexit on the horizon there are real opportunities out there for the Island and we need to ensure that we are positioned as a jurisdiction that is ready to take up the challenges and is one step ahead of our competitors.

This means we need the right level of regulation, and it needs to be meaningful, and so where regulations or regulators are unnecessarily impeding business Government needs to step in and review the situation.

It also means that, although we all know that finances are tight, Government cannot stop investing in new business. It's important to continue to support growth and maintain confidence.

Part of this investment has to be in our national infrastructure, our housing sector and our key utilities. Well maintained roads, available, affordable housing and reasonably priced and reliable utilities are essential to long term growth.

Lastly, our local economies are important, it's only by having thriving towns and villages that the whole Island economy can continue to grow. This is why it's essential for Government to encourage businesses to set up outside of Douglas, for too long the focus has been on our Capital and towns like Ramsey have been left behind.

So what does this mean in real terms?

The Economy



- We need to ensure businesses can more easily access banking by cutting through the red tape. We all want to ensure the Island has strong banking regulation but it needs to be pragmatic. If the Island is moving into new specialist markets our banking needs to keep up.
- Improve regulation of our key utility companies – for example the agreement between the Office of Fair Trading and Manx Gas is not fit for purpose. The Office of Fair Trading needs to be revamped to give it the powers it needs to properly protect consumers.
- Reintroduce the full National Insurance Holiday scheme. The original scheme was a great success, creating 1,685 jobs over three years.
- Increase investment in public sector housing – now that rents have increased to more sustainable levels these funds need to be reinvested back into our housing stock.
- Review the first time buyers scheme to make sure it works – we all know people who can't get on the housing ladder, lets help them by making this scheme work like it's supposed to.
- Include incentives within the new £50 million Economic Development Fund for companies to set up outside of Douglas.
- An early renegotiation of the Sea Services Agreement – our transport links are our lifeline and we need to secure their long term future.

The Isle of Man has always punched above its weight internationally and we can continue to be a world class place to do business, but only if Government works in partnership with private enterprise.

Health and Social Care



We all know that there are challenges facing our health service. Not enough funding, coupled with a growing and ageing population is putting increased strain on the NHS.

On top of this, the Island is having difficulty recruiting and retaining staff, and there are significant budget overruns as a result (nearly £10 million in 2016).

Why is this? In 2014 the West Midlands Quality Review (WMQR) found that there was *“A culture of blame between managers politicians and clinical staff”*

- The Department should engage with staff to find out and address their concerns, and help bring about the change in culture that is needed

The WMQR also found a number of failings at Noble’s Hospital:

- Only 36% of standards met in the Emergency Department
- Only 57% of standards met in Theatres and Anaesthetics
- Only 49% of standards met in Critical Care
- Our NHS should be responsible to an Independent Regulator – either our own, or joined up with the UK Care Quality Commission. This will ensure our NHS continues to meet essential standards.

NHS staff work tirelessly to provide a high quality service and they are being let down by a Department that seems unwilling or unable to change.

Finally – the NHS should remain free at the point of use. Under no circumstances should people have to pay to see their GP or other health professional.

Local Issues



Government has already started the process of transferring services to local authorities, without any extra funding, and at the same time has been increasing charges and fees. In the face of this and due in a large part to the hard work of Commissioners staff the Ramsey rate has remained unchanged.

- This sort of financial prudence is needed by our national Government.

During my time as a Commissioner I have been pushing Government for these increased responsibilities, to be allowed to play a greater role in the management of our Town and I will continue to push for this if elected to the House of Keys.

- A close working relationship with the Commissioners is essential to ensuring government services are delivered effectively.

Surely more government services could be available from the Town Hall? In this digital age there is no reason why people should have to travel to Douglas to deal with central government services.

To help support local businesses, parking in the town centre could be extended to more than two hours in Market Square and on the Quay – and should remain free.

One of the most pressing local issues is the future of our Courthouse building. Despite the hard work of a dedicated group of people, of which I was extremely proud to play a part, we didn’t manage to keep the Post Office in the building, so we need to make sure that it’s future is secured as a community space for the benefit of our whole town. Ramsey Commissioners are working on this and I will continue to fully support their efforts to safeguard this iconic building.

Don’t forget to use your vote on the 22nd September
Want to read more about my views on local issues?
www.lhooperiom.com/2016-local-manifesto

Tax and Welfare



The two key principles of our tax system should be:

- The Island needs to stay a low tax jurisdiction
- National services and infrastructure are paid out of national taxes – not rates.

The first of these principles means that although we are in financial difficulties, **taxing everyone more isn't the answer**. It's essential that we remain competitive on the international stage, even more so now that the UK will be looking for an additional edge post Brexit.

As part of this, we should:

- Increase the personal allowance to at least £14,000 as was promised before the 2016 budget
- Review the tax cap to make sure that it's working for the Island, and to find ways of encouraging tax capped individuals to contribute to the local economy.

The second principle means no more “toilet tax” style charges.

Rates are an inherently unfair tax, charging people based on property size and not on their ability to pay, or on how much they use the services they are paying for.

Some services, like refuse collection and water, should really be paid for on a “per use” basis. The more you use, the more you pay.

- These changes should coincide with a complete reform of the rates system itself – which should include reduced rates for single occupancy households, or people who earn very low income.

Ramsey North Polling Station

Methodist Church Hall, Waterloo Road

Tax and Welfare



When it comes to welfare, the whole system needs a shake-up

We have households living in fuel poverty, housing assistance that isn't suitable for everyone, nursing care payments that don't cover the cost of residential nursing care anywhere on Island and a public sector housing system that isn't targeting those most in need.

On top of this the Government has reduced the Age Allowance, cut the Personal Allowance Credit and isn't doing anything to help retain free TV licences for over 75's. All these decisions need to be revisited as part of a complete overhaul of our welfare system.

- We should better integrate our tax and welfare systems. This would reduce the amount of form filling and red tape that can stop people getting the assistance they need.

Better sharing of information would also allow Government to be more pro-active, being able to give people advice about help that they may not even be aware of.

- We should introduce a fair system of means testing. This shouldn't be designed to try and save money or cut costs, but instead to help identify people who may need more assistance as well as help better target our scarce resources.
- All this should be done through an Independent Tax and Welfare Commission, that would consult widely with the public and be able to recommend changes without political interference.

Ramsey South Polling Station

St Pauls Church Hall, Market Square

Government Reform



Government isn't working. The system we have puts too much power in the hands of Ministers, without effective scrutiny or oversight.

We've just seen an independent report produced by Lord Lisvane which recommends some significant changes to the way our Government works.

- MHK's should be responsible for Government and for policy – MLC's should be excluded from Government roles. They should not be Ministers or Members of Departments.
- Scrutiny committees should be strengthened so that decisions made by Government can have proper and effective oversight.
- As part of improving scrutiny we should immediately appoint an Auditor General and an Independent Ombudsman – it's time that Government started being held to account.

The Vision 9 fiasco, and the number of issues with the procurement process makes it clear that Government is dysfunctional – and that Departments still aren't talking to each other.

- This silo mentality must end and Departments need to work closer together, for an Island of only 85,000 people it shocks me how much red tape and bureaucracy our government has managed to set up.

I am a strong supporter of local authorities and firmly support more local services being provided locally. The Commissioners are better placed to address the needs of people living in the Town than a Government department who only rarely venture over the mountain.

You can find a detailed review of the Lisvane report on my website:

www.lhooperiom.com/the-lisvane-report

How do we afford it?



Lots of candidates will set out their plans for the future, but what it's extremely difficult to do is explain just how they would pay for them.

- Some things I would like to see happen (like reintroducing the full National Insurance Holiday) should pay for themselves in the long run through increased employment and higher tax receipts, the same can be said for greater investment in housing and in growing our economy.
- Reforming Government shouldn't be a costly exercise, it's mostly a case of re-juggling what's already there. Devolving more services to local authorities might result in an increase in rates, if this coincides with a reform of the rating system it has the potential to make the way we pay for all of our services fairer.
- Independent regulation of the Health service should pay for itself in savings, efficiencies and a better service delivered to everyone. The Government have a medical indemnity fund set up specifically to insure against medical claims against the DHSC being drawn down at **£1m a year** – surely robust independent regulation would cut down on medical claims, saving money in legal costs and payouts.

I'll be the first to accept that it's not all going to work out perfectly, but I firmly believe that better targeting of our resources across all of Government will enable us to deliver the reforms we need. I'd rather have spent £473,000 on tax relief for educational covenants, or on graduate employment incentives than on resurfacing the sloc. And at the end of the day if we have to cut back on spending in the Cabinet office or the DED to fund education initiatives that's not a bad thing.

- Priority budgeting and more joined up thinking are essential to targeting our resources better.

Finally – the killer question. Public Sector Pensions.

- On this we are all going to have to bite the bullet, current pensioners, current workers and the taxpayer. There is absolutely no way we can plug the short term funding gap without radical changes. Some changes have already been made, and the current workers are already feeling the pinch so any further changes can only be with the support of everyone involved.