

RAMSEY TOWN COMMISSIONERS ELECTION
NORTH WARD

THURSDAY 26th APRIL 2012 – RAMSEY TOWN HALL



GRAHAM JONES

VOTE FOR COMMON SENSE - VOTE FOR GRAHAM JONES

LOCAL RESIDENT FOR 42 YEARS

Dear Voter,

Are you happy with your Local Authority's performance? Or are you fed up with a system that spends your money on nonessentials and with little benefit - a system that has little influence with central government and is far too bureaucratic?



Those people who spend our money act like it's their right to spend our money. It's not. Let us bring back some common sense and challenge the 'ivory tower' thinking. We need to change the present mind-set in favour of NOT spending where we don't need to, and spending instead on that which only directly benefits the ratepayer or is of proven **economic benefit to the town.**

The Island has lost upwards of one-third of its family budget thanks to the UK, yet this simple fact still does not seem to be hitting home when it comes to those in charge of administering how our money is spent.

Most wage earners and pensioners have not been in receipt of salary increases for some time. Jobs are no longer secure and we still have rising costs - especially in food and fuel. This equates to a reduction in our spend.

We have all witnessed the fiasco of Ramsey spending over £180,000 to 'repair' Shoprite car park. WHAT A WASTE! There was a far more common sense approach, one which would also have benefitted the shopper and Shoprite (a Manx Company) and at vastly reduced cost.

Now we have the nonsense of revised parking on the quay imposed on the town by the Department of Infrastructure. It simply doesn't work. As well as being thoroughly dangerous, it is a complete waste of time, effort and money. Hopefully it will be returned to the way it was, but the cost will rise and, of course, no one will be held accountable.

VALUE FOR MONEY DOESN'T MEAN IT'S OK TO SPEND OUR HARD EARNED CASH IF THE 'PRICE IS RIGHT'.

Was the Commission ineffectual with regard to this? Or does the town have no say in how we are treated by central government?

And do we really need more than 125 signs in the Mooragh Park telling us what we cannot do with warnings of dire consequences? This clutter is totally unnecessary and detracts from an otherwise pleasant park.

These examples show real arrogance when it comes to how, when and why our money is spent. Make no mistake, as central government seeks to rebalance its books following the drastic reductions in VAT returns, it will try and load a greater financial burden onto the ratepayers. We therefore need to start THINKING FRUGAL. My stance is to question proposed costs - are they necessary or just desirable? And if merely desirable, is it worth spending other people's money?

Value for money doesn't mean it's ok to spend our hard earned cash if the 'price is right'. The price has to be measured against exactly what is being asked for. So part of the equation is whether what is being asked for is right in the first place. No more gold-plated ideas!



RAMSEY REGENERATION - JOBS ARE KEY

In relation to its population, Ramsey has an abundance of shops, eating establishments and pubs, but relatively few other businesses. It always did.

But just look at the mass exodus from Ramsey to Douglas each morning - that is where our spending power goes each day. The jobs are in Douglas and if the people are not in Ramsey they can't spend their money here and help fill the shops. Ramsey is a dormitory town, so let's not pretend that spending money on posh paving and lighting by itself is going to make a scrap of difference to the economic wellbeing of the town.

The town has benefited recently from two new schools and a swimming pool and we also have a superb local hospital. However, the jobs in these establishments have been with us for a long time. We need more jobs in town that create wealth - wealth which gets spent in the town's shops and cafes that can then turn a greater profit with more money then directed into enhancing the overall look of Ramsey.

There is some success such as the redevelopment of Bridge Chambers - a splendid new building brought about despite a negative-thinking planning department. And let's not forget the part that the shipyard, OCRA, Charterhouse and a host of other smaller concerns play in keeping the town alive.

However, the town needs an awful lot more local jobs. We need to be badgering government for its somewhat limited resources, making a credible case for creating a business / industrial park or even a free port, with inducements in the form of rates holidays or tax holidays.

We need to develop a long-term job creation strategy for the town in partnership with government bodies to bring this about. It will take a long time, but happen it must. Only then, with more jobs in Ramsey, will the town regenerate itself, become more vibrant and bring about that face-lift we are all looking for. This can't happen the other way round.

THE MARINA & FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

In my forty-plus years working here, the idea of a Ramsey Marina has ebbed and flowed. Where are we today? Nowhere is the short answer – and we are nowhere because of suspicion and a general negative attitude. One can only respect the heartfelt views of some, but others have vacillated or changed their minds to court popular opinion and consequently we may have missed the boat.

The idea of a marina **MUST NOT** be seen in isolation and separate from the general concept of regeneration. Much more than a 'boat park' (Peel's marina probably attracts £250,000 per annum in fees alone), a marina provides an extremely pleasant environment that would attract the right sort of inward investment into the general harbour area – whether that is offices, bistros, or apartments.

The whole of the harbour area is pivotal to creating the right environment for the investment, jobs and visitors we are looking for. Despite the government revenue reductions we **MUST NOT** throw our hands in the air. We have to keep the marina alive – it has to be part-and-parcel of developing that long-term strategy. We don't want 'talking shops', we want action, and we will need to be very persistent.



HOUSING

Housing is a national issue and the provision of reasonable housing is a measure of a civilised society. There will always be a requirement upon society to provide a decent standard of housing to those who deserve it - and can least afford the economic rents.

The present situation of the general taxpayer subsidising social housing to the tune of £7 million per annum (and rising rapidly) is not sustainable and most of all **NOT FAIR** to the taxpayer.

The Department of Social Care are tackling this unsustainability and Ramsey needs to be at the forefront in helping formulate the scheme Tynwald eventually adopts. Ramsey must not bury its head, it will change one way or another and Ramsey needs to be fighting for the deserving minority and for the tax/ratepayer in general.

The response the Commission has to the Housing Review Consultation is crucial in shaping housing policy. Don't rely on the Commission to provide the response you would yourself – this consultation is open to all individuals and I urge you to exercise your democratic right and respond yourself. It's your money!

The consultation in question is the Department of Social Care Affordable Housing Provision on the Island Consultation Report, March 2012. Copies should be available at the town hall, at Markwell House and via the government website at www.gov.im/consultations.gov

TOWN PLANNING

There is often the complaint that the planning department take little notice of the comments made on applications by the Commission, and that the town should be responsible for all first stage planning.

Any response to the planning department has to be made against the vast planning legislation and current planning policy for the area, the interpretation of the policy in relation to each and every application, and must be sensible and not emotive.

It is indeed unfortunate that planning officers rarely visit the sites of applications and often have little affinity with the Island. In the early 1970s I visited every site as part of my then role in the Local Government Board (DOLGE / Infrastructure).

We are striving to reduce bureaucracy, not increase it, but what we must develop is a more robust approach and relationship with the planning department to discuss issues. Then maybe our voices will be heard.

HEALTH

We must remain vigilant to make sure the Cottage Hospital can maintain its level of services in these restricted times and support as necessary the Ramsey Cottage Hospital League of Friends.

POLICING

Dialogue with the police and any sensible initiatives are always welcome. The town still does have a good sense of community and we must strive to maintain this. The police must be seen as being inclusive and part of the community.

LEISURE

Whilst maintaining the present high standard of our parks and swimming pool we must be very mindful not to be tempted into micro-managing these facilities, spending money where it is not necessary.

REFUSE AND RECYCLING

We have a very good bin collection service and now a new civic amenity site – well done! It's just a pity as an Island we have more refuse collection vehicles per capita than anywhere in the UK. Ramsey's refuse collection vehicles represent hundreds of thousands of pounds of capital spend are left idle for a large part of the day. This is an under use of a capital asset that could be part of a pooled resource.

People are becoming more responsible for their waste. It is good to see recycling bins used to good effect, however there is still a great deal more that needs to be done. Slowly attitudes will change in favour of reducing waste and Ramsey ought to be able to help people recycle. There are many schemes available but they must be sensible and simple to implement and administer.

DIALOGUE WITH GOVERNMENT

We have two MHKs: Alan Bell - our Chief Minister - and Leonard Singer. So we couldn't get nearer to the top. Regular discussions with our Tynwald representatives would benefit the town greatly on its local and national issues and help the Commission with its deliberations.

THE FUTURE

The next four years will be crucial for the Island and for Ramsey. The present system of delivering local services by a multitude of local authorities will change – of that there is no doubt. Ramsey has to be at the forefront in shaping how this is constituted and how services are best delivered in the new economic climate. We need to have a common sense approach to arrive at sensible, economically viable answers. This is our children's future.

Vote for common sense on Thursday 26th April, Ramsey Town Hall, North Ward

GRAHAM STEWART JONES, DIP. ARCH. (LIVERPOOL)

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Born: 1945

Parents: Irish and Welsh

Status: Married

Schooling and University: Liverpool

Profession: Chartered Architect (Retired)



CAREER 1970 – 2008

- IOM LGB (DOLGE), Department of Planning and Architecture
- Private Practice
- Douglas Corporation - Engineering Department
- Partner - Kay and Gill, Douglas
- Partner - J.G. Corlett and Partners, Ramsey
- Partner - Corlett and Kinrade, Ramsey

EXPERIENCE (DESIGN AND SUPERVISION)

- Hospital and Medical Facilities
- Local Authority Housing (new builds and refurbishments)
- Swimming Pools
- Lakeside Centre, Ramsey
- Police and Communication Buildings - including the Emergency Joint Control Room, Douglas



Representation of the People Act 1995 – Local Elections Act 1986.

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