

Michael Commissioners Election 2012

Thursday 26 April 8am – 8pm



Stephen W Hamer

Background. Born, educated and worked on the Island. Christened in Bishopscourt chapel, and grew up in Port Erin, Laxey and Douglas, but like many other Manx men and women had to leave the island to progress. Having held senior positions in the UK electricity supply industry, I returned to my 'roots' ten years ago. Married with three grown up children, the youngest working on the Island. My wife Jeanette was Headteacher at Michael School.



Why stand for re-election? Local Government is the foundation stone of our democratic system. Some very experienced Commissioners are standing down and it is important to have another team with a very broad range of expertise to deal a wide range of issues, including Government and its many departments. We need to resist proposals to do away with Local Authorities and replace them with just a few Regional authorities. Not only would our Rates double but services would diminish. I have publically challenged Ministers in the past on this issue and will continue to do so – there are no benefits for us. Remaining silent would result in the end of many efficient locally based services. I speak for Michael as a member of the Municipal Association, which represents Local Authorities on the Island.

Change. Change is one of the things we all have foisted upon us at some time during our life, and communities are no exception. We are naturally concerned about change, perhaps feel threatened by it, but it can also produce benefits. New residents can be the means of preventing further closure of shops and services - village Post Offices and banks regularly come under such threat. New residents have helped stabilise rates (they haven't increased for three years) and provide additional income for local initiatives, businesses, new members for local clubs and societies and increased the success of local events, etc.

Development. I supported the land-exchange proposals as the best way to secure the future of Michael School. Falling school rolls in the north could see Ballaugh School close and many pupils come to Michael. Any package has good and bad points, and on balance I believed this to be advantageous, providing improved facilities now, and protecting the school from development up to its boundary in future. This view was also held by the School Governors, Captain of the Parish, Commissioners and Tynwald itself. Along with other Commissioners I raised objections to aspects of the proposed development on the land behind the school, albeit pleased to see plans included for much needed social housing for the elderly and First Time Buyers. It also secured the historic Fair Field for the community.

Medical Provision. As Chairman, my appearance at the Bar of Tynwald was to plead the case for equality for the people of Michael – a district bereft of doctors, nurses or dentists. Tynwald members were well aware that the £2 million over-sized surgery planned for Jurby could not be justified but were not prepared to split the cost so that both our communities could benefit. A Branch Surgery equipped for use by both Peel and Ramsey GP surgeries needs active consideration as our current population does not meet the DHSS criteria for a separate GPs surgery.

Communication. I have worked with fellow Commissioners to improve this by additional and upgraded public noticeboards in the village. Minutes of meetings and other official notices are now better displayed and the website updated regularly. Office opening hours have been extended so that the Clerk is available for some hours every weekday to deal with your requests.

Refuse. The present collection system works well, and a second wheelie bin is available for a small one-off cost. The broad-based, common sense attitude of our refuse collectors is to be applauded. I shall continue to liaise through the Board with the DOI and our contractors (NPRCB) to ensure that this policy continues. We do not want a UK styled enforcement and fines issued for minor infringements.

Western Amenity Site. This valuable facility based at St Johns needs to be open for longer hours on at least one weekday to allow working people the opportunity to dispose of their larger rubbish on the way to, or back from work.

I supported the substantial Government investment in improving the Western Amenity Site and also permitting our free use of all the other amenity sites.

Recycling. Communal 'bring banks' for paper, glass, cans, etc are a very effective way to recycle. Meetings with Government officials confirm that doorstep recycling is only effective in built-up areas, albeit trials in the east of the Island have shown it to be expensive. Exporting material to the UK for recycling incurs shipping charges and significant licence fees. Best to reuse on Island if possible.

Environment. Dog mess is one issue that naturally concerns many. We have more dog bins than any other similar sized Local Authority, as well as an active Bylaws Officer. It took a lot of time and effort to get the Dog Bylaws legally drafted and approved by the Attorney General's office. It is my aim to continue to press Tynwald to speed up the extension of them to our public car parks and the churchyard – so far it has taken almost three years of painfully slow legislation.

Sewerage. We will not now be connected to the all island sewage system IRIS. Discussions held with the Water & Sewage Authority to replace the present basic system at Balleria have been productive and new plant should be in operation by next summer. We must continue to put pressure on Peel to do something about its raw sewage discharge which comes ashore as it travels northwards with the tide.

Coastal protection. This must not be allowed to quietly slip off the Government agenda, as it has in the past. Legislation requires the DOI to re-survey the area but that has yet to happen. The problem won't go away, but a viable solution, even for partial protection, is possible if money can be found.

Utilities. Badgering utility companies have brought about much needed improvements. Water quality has improved significantly with a new distribution main from the Sulby Treatment Works to the village. By the end of the year, we will benefit from lower gas prices after natural gas is brought into the village. I fully supported the proposals, paid for through central taxation, to extend the availability and replace LPG butane. It was ironical that natural gas was brought ashore at Glen Mooar but no provision was made for a local tee-off at the time.

Traffic. For the past eight years I have represented you in regular meetings with the Dept of Transport (now DOI) and the Police regarding traffic management. There is official resistance to change any part of the TT Course, so our narrow pavements cannot be widened nor traffic calming measures introduced along the Main Road.. However, the condition of pavements and roadways are under regular review as is drainage and parking. Electronic speed warning signs were obtained at no cost to the ratepayer, and used throughout the village. An additional pedestrian crossing north of the Lychgate and at the Saddlery would permit a safer route for pedestrians, but is resisted by the DOI. Liaison with the Police is excellent, both locally and the Peel based Western Neighbourhood Policing Team.

One area of on-going concern has been the difficulty of parking for Broogh Wyllin residents. While the roadway and pavement layout was designed to meet current Planning criteria to slow down traffic,

I believe it has created other problems. Discussions with the developer were successful in getting a further eight parking spaces created at no cost to the ratepayer. I am still pursuing marked parking spaces for First Time Buyers, despite a very reluctant Departmental policy not to do so. Parking of commercial vehicles overnight is being changed by legislation.

Public Transport. As a Founding Committee member of TravelWatch Isle of Man I have an active interest in all forms of public transport. In our community, that is buses and taxis, and I have appeared before the Road Transport Licencing Committee (RTLCL) more than once to argue our case. We now have a more regular service with additional peak hour, late night and weekend provision. Many discussions with senior staff and directors provided five new bus shelters.

Young People. With three teachers in the family, and having been a School Governor, I know they are important and active members of our community. The last few years have seen an investment in additional play equipment and picnic benches, but more are needed. Progress with a BMX track has been frustratingly slow, however, significant advances have recently been made.

Expenses. I firmly believe that it is a privilege to represent a community and I seek no recompense for the many hours and miles it needs to do the job properly, whether in daytime or evenings. While Commissioners elsewhere claim fees for attending meetings and travelling expenses, etc for Michael Commissioners to do so would add about £10,000 pa to our district Rates bill. We also put many hours into running Glen Wyllin campsite with its prestigious three pennant rating. Not only is it a valuable local asset but provides income to help keep the Rates low.

Finally. By choice, we live in Kirk Michael where we have been made welcome and have immersed ourselves in the community. Many residents commute into Douglas, but have integrated well into local life despite their daily travelling. I am actively involved as a member of your Commissioners, Parish Church and Burial Authority and have a genuine interest in this community and its people. With eight years' experience, I would value the opportunity to serve you for a further term.

Thank you for taking time to read this manifesto. If you wish to further discuss any matter further please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or fax on (01624) 877814 or email shamer@michaelcommissioners.com. Above all, please use your vote - you may elect between one to seven candidates.

