



## **Ramsgate Town Council**

### **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES**

**As per Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12, PART 111(S9 (1))**

**Venue: Radford House, 18-20 Effingham Street, Ramsgate (the old fire station)**

**Date: Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 7pm**

**Membership: All Local Government Electors residing within the Parish of Ramsgate**

**Present: Cllrs Albon (Chair of the Council)  
Moore  
Ara  
Huxley  
Hudson  
Nixey  
Ovenden  
Green  
Austin  
Crittenden  
Makinson**

**16 Members of the public  
Miss L Fidler, Town Clerk (Minutes)**

#### **AM58 INTRODUCTION**

The Annual Town Meeting for Ramsgate was convened, with attendees gathered as constituents rather than as part of a council. It was explained that Cllr Albon, as the Chair of the Town Council, would be chairing the proceedings for the evening.

Attendees were instructed to raise their hand when wishing to speak, await their turn to be called upon, and refrain from speaking over others. Unlike council meetings, all present were granted the right to both speak and vote. However, it was clarified that any decisions made during the meeting did not bind the Town, District, or County Council to action; instead, matters would follow the usual decision-making channels within the relevant authorities.

Furthermore, attendees were reminded to switch their mobile phones to silent mode, and the location of emergency exits was pointed out for safety.

Notably, this year's meeting occurred during the pre-election period, which was deemed procedurally acceptable by the Monitoring Officer at TDC, as no council

decisions were being made. It was emphasised, however, that the meeting was not a platform for political campaigning or the promotion of candidates.

The purpose of the meeting was stated as an opportunity for local residents to voice their concerns, with elected members present to listen attentively. Introductions were made to the attending councillors.

### **AM59 MINUTES OF THE TOWN MEETING**

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023 (Minutes AM52-AM57) were approved.

### **AM60 REPORT FROM RAMSGATE TOWN COUNCIL**

The following updates were received:

#### **(i) Cllr Albon – Council**

- In May 2023, 16 newly elected councillors began a 4-year term, with three new members joining the council.
- 13 councillors also serve as district councillors.
- The speaker was elected Chair of the Council, and Cllr Pat Moore returned as Mayor.
- Council projects and priorities have largely continued due to consistency in membership.
- Progress has been made on projects initiated after the pandemic.
- Relationship with TDC has improved following a re-organisation of the Corporate Management Team.
- The district council is beginning to see the town council as an asset, particularly in borrowing equipment like the Nifty Lift.
- Discussions are ongoing with TDC about transferring management of assets such as East Cliff Lift, Bandstand, Warre Rec Skatepark, and pocket parks to the town council.
- The 2024–25 budget was approved with a 4% increase, equating to £3.33 per year (28p per month) for a Band D property.
- The town council's precept remains around 5% of the total council tax bill.
- Cllr Dark sadly passed away, and an election for the Northwood Ward vacancy will take place in May.
- Appreciation was expressed for hardworking council staff, particularly the Technicians, for their community contributions.

#### **(ii) Right Worshipful the Mayor of Ramsgate – Cllr Moore**

The Mayor is committed to serving, supporting, and promoting Ramsgate. The past years' activities have included:

- A trip to Chimay to receive an award for Ramsgate.
- The Mayor of Conflans will visit Ramsgate.
- Promoting Ramsgate during a visit from the Lord Lieutenant of Kent.
- Ramsgate hosted the Wheels of Time event.
- Hosting the High Sheriff of Kent on a visit to Ramsgate.
- Opening facilities at Mencap and the football club.
- Cutting the ribbon at a football pitch opening, followed by a tour.

The Mayor emphasised Ramsgate's uniqueness and the importance of promoting it.

### **(iii) Cllr Green – Finance & General Purposes Committee**

This committee is responsible for finance, staff and other general business.

- A new Grant Scrutiny Panel will review grant applications quarterly and make recommendations to the Council.
- The budget is scrutinised quarterly, with adjustments for under/overspending.
- Funding will continue for a Session Supervisor at Ramsgate Citizens Advice Bureau, the only drop-in service in Thanet.
- The Council will fund Pie Factory Music's youth drop-in sessions for six months after KCC funding ceased.
- Accessible toilets will be installed at four allotment sites.
- A safety audit of council trees is complete, with remedial work underway.
- Significant repairs and maintenance have been carried out at The Custom House.
- New staff members include a Technician, Mayor's PA, Allotment Officer, and Office Administrator.
- The speaker represents the council on the Thanet Regeneration Partnership Board.

### **(iv) Cllr Nixey – Radford House**

- Central heating has been restored, and an accessible toilet installed. Extensive external repairs have been carried out.
- A programme of "meanwhile uses" is underway to test the building's functionality before drafting a long-term business plan.
- Upstairs tenants provide a base income to help subsidise community events.
- The NHS is offering mental health services from the building while their facilities are refurbished, and KCC are running 1-2-1 support sessions.
- A weekly Chat Time session on Tuesday mornings offers social opportunities and talks on various topics.
- Take Back Your Power sessions will begin next week, providing holistic wellbeing support for people recovering from cancer.
- Radford House has hosted a fashion show for charity, parties, crafts, singing, arts, drama, yoga, mental health activities, children's activities, business training workshops, and community group meetings, including the creation of the Ramsgate Horticultural Society.
- A further planning application was submitted to TDC late last year to refine the initial plans, and a decision is awaited.
- The next steps include finalising detailed plans (e.g. plug socket placements), confirming costs, going out to tender, and starting construction in summer.
- Efforts are ongoing to secure grants for the project.
- Feedback is essential – attendees are asked to complete a user survey available in printed form or via QR codes in the building. All responses contribute to the business plan.
- Follow Radford House on social media for updates.

#### **(v) Cllr Austin – Climate Change Task Group**

An interesting group, partly councillors & partly residents. We've put together an action plan – what will we do internally, how will we work with other councils, and how we can work with residents. For example:

- Work at Radford & the Custom House to improve insulation and reduce the carbon impact of these historic buildings. Ongoing work is not cheap, but worth it in the long term.
- The green procurement policy & changes to working practices, from refurbished laptops to better recycling. We've got an electric van in the fleet.
- The Repair Cafe, Shed and Toolbank; a grant of £1,375 from the Department of Work & Pensions has been secured to deliver these initiatives. A variety of skills – sewing, upholstery, bike maintenance from Pie Factory, carpentry and tool sharpening. A lot of interest from residents and from doctor's surgeries who would like to refer gentleman to us.
- The Refill programme and plans for a water fountain on the Main Sands to reduce single use plastics.
- Plans to expand food growing and plant more trees & hedges later this year.
- The tips & ideas we're sharing with residents through the Community Ad Mag.
- Working with TDC is working much better, TDC cabinet made the decision not to use glyphosate. Working with KCC is more challenging – 20mph schemes are particularly difficult.
- Information about Litter Picks provided.

#### **(vi) Cllr Hetherington – Planning & Infrastructure Committee**

The Planning and Infrastructure Committee has been consulted on 262 planning applications, of which the committee made comment on 56 applications. The committee has also made comment on 4 licensing applications.

The committee has also been consulted on and made comment on the following consultations:

- Site Access to New Haine Road
- The Ramsgate Neighbourhood Plan
- Zebra Crossing Proposal at Chatham House School
- The Ramsgate Highways Improvement Plan
- Kent Highways Speed Limit Order – Spratling Lane
- The Sea Link Project
- Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

The Planning and Infrastructure Committee is looking to consult the public on the Neighbourhood Plan in the near future.

A Highways Improvement Plan has been created by Councillors.

#### **(vii) Cllr Crittenden – Town Promotion Committee**

There are many strands to this committee's work, including:

- Regular meetings with the Town Centre & Tourism Manager to support tourism and improve the town for businesses and residents.

- Active Ramsgate is a flagship project, now managed in-house with a dedicated project manager. Active Ramsgate Week planned.
- Open Spaces Strategy Group collaborates with CCTG, supporting volunteer gardens and providing assistance via Technicians.
- Facelift Thursday initiative launched to tidy specific areas.
- Improved lighting installed in the Harbour Arches.
- Wayfinding and street art projects, including Ravens artwork.
- Rebekah working with businesses at the upper end of the High Street.
- Ensuring HSHAZ funds are effectively used through the Spinning Plates project.
- Commitment to using funds wisely to enhance the town, including relocating Palms to more sustainable locations.
- Decision not to hold NYE fireworks, but events funding has been increased.
- The Visitor Information Centre (VIC) is open six days a week throughout the year.
- The Community Ad continues to be delivered to all households in Ramsgate, 21,000 households.

### **AM61 GUEST PRESENTATION: RAMSGATE SALVATION ARMY**

Carl Whitehead, Leader of Ramsgate Salvation Army, gave a presentation on the activities of the Salvation Army and their work to help people in need in the community.

The Salvation Army had not been intended as a social works programme, but became a leader in innovative support since the Victorian era.

The organisation adapts to local needs with various services, including:

- Early morning shelter for rough sleepers (Mon-Fri, 6:30 am).
- Parent and toddler group, trauma workshops, and Alpha course with dinner.
- Daily food collection from supermarkets for redistribution.
- Lunch service and **Ukrainian Community Hub**.
- Friendship & lunch club, free kids' music classes (25 children weekly).
- **DWP job training workshop, foodbank, and Employment Plus.**
- Kids' club dinner, **youth fellowship**, and **mini-market**.
- Open daily, providing help to those in need.
- **Collaboration with services:** Works with probation services and police custody.
- **Emergency accommodation:** Pays for hotel stays when needed.
- **Support needed:** Funding, volunteers, and donations (e.g. furniture, warehouse items).
- **Charity shop:** A shop in Minster exists, but no plans for one locally due to current focus.
- **Social media improvement:** Needs better outreach to request assistance.

The Town Council was thanked for their support.

### **AM62 OPEN FORUM**

The meeting was opened for questions and comments from the electors of Ramsgate. The following is a summary of the discussion:

- **Comment: Bretts Aggregate** – Can the contract be re-negotiated by TDC?  
**Response:** No, and KCC is very supportive of this business.
- **Comment: Tall Ships** – Can TDC be pushed to fund this?  
**Response:** RTC contributed £1,500 to a feasibility study. Unsure if TDC would be prepared to fund the event.
- **Comment: King George VI Statue** – Why isn't RTC doing anything?  
**Response:** RTC did not take responsibility for the statue, the Chair has spoken with the widow of the sculptor and offered support for her fundraising efforts, with help from Brenda Blethyn. The original proposed location was on KCC land; RTC did not own any suitable land. Concerns were raised about vandalism, and RTC agreed to consider it when the time came. The priority was to finish the statue before deciding on its location.
- **Comment: Neighbourhood Policing** – A year ago, Ian Swallow announced that neighbourhood policing would return with named officers. However, a memo from Matthew Scott later outlined a £16 million cut over three years, reducing PCSOs. Despite the promotion of "My Community Voice," few people knew their local officers, and there was a severe lack of communication and engagement. Attempts to engage with the police showed that neighbourhood policing had been replaced by a community safety unit, pulling officers away from local areas.  
**Response:** Chief Insp. Swallow was invited to meet with RTC, and some targeted problems in the town were addressed. RTC requested biannual meetings, but they never materialised. The shift away from PCSOs was confirmed last year. Ward councillors were informed of their local officers and remained in contact, but turnover was high, preventing officers from building local knowledge. The night-time economy posed ongoing issues, leading to an increased police presence in the evenings, alongside a greater presence of Community Pastors. The Police and Crime Commissioner elections are upcoming.
- **Question: Policing and Anti-Social Behaviour** – What is being done?  
**Response:** RTC stressed the need to know who local PCs were, with ward councillors playing a role in informing the police. Councils do have some powers to prevent anti-social behaviour.
- **Question: What is the Town Fund Money?**  
**Response:** Ramsgate was awarded £20 million in Levelling Up funding over ten years, to be allocated over seven years. TDC needed to identify projects that met specific criteria, but the criteria were unclear. It was suspected that money would need to be spent upfront, with reimbursement decided later. The East Cliff Lift was mentioned as a potential recipient of funds, but nothing was confirmed.
- **Question: What is happening with the East Cliff Shelter?** The event at the East Cliff Shelters by Busk to Dusk was successful, but TDC planned to lease out the shelters, raising concerns.  
**Response:** It was clarified that the £8k funding was applied to all shelters, not just one. The events team could work with estates to ensure continued access. Cllr Albon offered to intervene if needed.
- **Question: When is the Ramsgate Market returning?**  
**Response:** RTC wrote to the Head of Estates, having fought hard to bring the market back. It was expected to relaunch on 4th April but faced a short

delay. The market is planned for Fridays, with potential expansion to Saturdays if successful. Free parking on Saturdays was available in Cannon Street.

- **Question:** What **Boundary Changes** will Ramsgate have?  
**Response:** The impact on the town council was uncertain. It would not automatically change RTC, but a request could be made.
- **Question:** What is the **relationship like between RTC/TDC**.  
**Response:** TDC recognises the benefits RTC provides and considers what TDC can do in return to assist with town council.

#### **AM63 CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

A recording of the full meeting including the presentation by the Salvation Army can be found on at: <https://youtu.be/fKCK5vPMQrE>