



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 22nd March 2023 at 7pm

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

Present: Cllrs Albon (Chair of the Council)
Moore
Ara
Huxley
Nixey
Ovenden
Green
Wing
Austin
Crittenden
Hetherington
Chief Inspector Ian Swallow
15 Members of the public
Miss L Fidler, Town Clerk (Minutes)

AM52 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, will 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 Chief Inspector Ian Swallow, District Commander for Thanet, as well as to attending councillors.

Apologies were noted from the Leader of TDC, Cllr Ashbee, the Chief Executive of TDC, Mr. Carmichael, and Cllrs L Piper, S Piper, and Makinson.

AM53 MINUTES OF THE TOWN MEETING

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 30th March 2022 (Minutes AM47-AM51) were approved.

AM54 REPORT FROM KENT POLICE

A presentation from Chief Inspector Ian Swallow was received, which provided an update on the Policing situation in Thanet and the changes to Neighbourhood Policing that will affect the local community. Context was provided on what these changes mean and what the priorities will be moving forwards.

Financial challenges and a recent report into the Metropolitan Police was explained. Pride in the distinct culture of Kent Police compared to larger forces was expressed, but it was acknowledged that there is room for improvement based on criticism.

Due to budget constraints, Kent Police underwent a review affecting neighbourhood and frontline policing, resulting in a reduction of PCSOs from 300 to 100 countywide. However, the new Chief Constable, Smith, is committed to bolstering frontline services, including increasing the number of police officers.

In Thanet, a restructuring plan will assign a named PCSO to each district, with certain areas now combined. Additionally, a new policing model will ensure every ward has a named police constable, with extra coverage in problematic zones. A bespoke child protection team will focus on schools and missing children.

A multi-agency task force, involving the police, TDC, Health Service, and KFRS, has been established to address area-specific risks, with Thanet set to benefit due to its proactive approach.

In Ramsgate, targeted efforts have been made to address core issues, including implementing accredited schemes and increasing CCTV coverage. Community engagement tools like "My Community Voice" were promoted.

During the Q&A session, concerns were raised about resource allocation, public engagement, licensing issues, speeding, and reporting mechanisms. Kent Police provided explanations and reassurances, emphasising targeted approaches and collaboration with the community to tackle persistent challenges.

AM55 REPORT FROM RAMSGATE TOWN COUNCIL

The following reports were received for activities in the 2022/2023 year:

Overall Council (from Cllr Albon)

- The Precept for 2023/2024 was increased by 2%; this equates to £1.62 per year for a Band D Property. This increase was required due to rising fuel costs, staffing costs and a number of capital projects that are in the pipeline.
- Despite suggestions to the contrary, no funds have been spent in relation to Manston Airport in the past year.
- The Council resolved to take over the East Cliff Lift from TDC as an asset transfer and get this operational again.
- The Ramsgate Fund has assisted community groups and organisations with 12 projects, totalling £34,434.00.
- £59,729.19 has been awarded in grants to enable events and activities in the town.
- The Council has set it's strategic aims for the coming year; this of course may be subject to change by the new Council after May's election.

Planning & Infrastructure (from Cllr Albon, Cllr Makinson has sent her apologies)

- Members have called in 78 planning applications for scrutiny and comment.
- The Neighbourhood Plan has progressed.

Mayor of Ramsgate (Cllr Ara)

- Has attended many ceremonial and community events, including Armed Forces Day, Remembrance Sunday and Holocaust Memorial Day. All our events are multi-faith, with representatives from across the community taking part.
- The successful Jubilee Event took place and praise went to the Town Centre and Tourism Manager's efforts in organising activities across four days.
- The Mayor has also celebrated the opening of numerous new shops, and especially noted the positive impact of the international community.
- The hard work undertaken by volunteers in Ramsgate was thoroughly congratulated.

Finance & General Purposes (Cllr Green)

- The Council has paid for a Session Supervisor at the Citizen's Advice Bureau, provided a counselling room to the Rape Crisis Counselling Service, and funded the Salvation Army 'Soup Run' over this winter.

- The council has increased its recycling and committed not to use single use plastics.
- A Climate Change Task Group has been formed, with invaluable input from members of the community.
- There has been a tremendous paperwork exercise (which continues) to bring the Council up to date on all its policies and procedures, to ensure the good governance of the Council.
- A community engagement strategy has started to help raise awareness of what the Council does, how to engage with residents will be included in this work.
- We continued to manage over 400 allotment plots across five sites.
- Members have awarded nearly £10,000 in small grants for specific ward related projects.

Radford House (Cllr Nixey)

- We now have a professional design team (incl. Architect) who are finalising the fine detail of the redesign, the actual work is expected to commence at the end of this year.
- Meanwhile uses of the building are about to start, this will involve hiring out Radford House now, and it will allow us to “test” the building, which will inform the long term business plan.
- We’ve appointed a Community Engagement & Events Organiser for the building to organise these bookings, test the market and consult with users. Bookings with the Festival of Sound, Senses Festival, art therapy for children, hireable art space and a variety of other hirers are now being made.
- A programme of external repairs is due to be undertaken in the next couple of months.

Town Promotion (from Cllr Crittenden)

- Rebekah Smith, Town Centre & Tourism Manager, was congratulated on her hard work.
- A monthly Pop Up Market at Charlotte Court has started.
- The Visitor Information Centre is now open 7 days per week.
- The Council has created a new part-time job to manage the Active Ramsgate initiative.
- An open spaces strategy has commenced to look at how to improve the green spaces in Ramsgate; including how to encourage and support the volunteer gardening groups, and what areas the town council could take over from TDC. Reduce the environmental poverty in the area.

- Facelift Thursday has started, whereby the Technician's blitz a neglected area on Thursdays.
- A three-day town centre Jubilee event was organised, and grants were given across the Wards to support neighbourhood Jubilee activities.

AM56 OPEN FORUM

- The Town Council was asked if it would stand firm against the proposed expansion by Bretts Aggregate. The Chair explained that TDC's Chief Executive has been delegated power to negotiate this matter and if/when the town council is consulted, the council will consider the proposal before them.
- The low number of attendees at the meeting was raised, it was confirm that the meeting had been advertised extensively across the community, but how to improve this will be reconsidered for next year.
- The Madeira Walk waterfall was discussed; the councillors have complained about the apparently lack of action for years about this. We believe that the pump is too old & broken to be repaired. The matter will be raised with the relevant TDC Cabinet member.
- TDC have now employed more officers to deal with outstanding issues, and the return of the weekly market is being addressed. There is a company that manage Swanley market who would be interested in running Ramsgate's market. The hold up is currently with KCC.
- The Council has not taken responsibility for the King George statue; it is believe that fundraising continues.
- Parking in Ramsgate must be addressed and seen as more than just a revenue stream. It was confirmed that TDC is undertaking a parking review across the district. Once the review is completed RTC can consider it, but RTC will have little say in the matter; TDC charge the town council for suspending parking during Remembrance Sunday.
- Ownership of the Tidal Ball was raised, there used to be someone who manually raised a lowered this. The Town Council will look into the matter.
- The relationship with the district council was raised; it was confirmed that the working relationship with the district council is improving. The town council doesn't believe that Ramsgate gets the same input that Margate and Broadstairs receives and we're working to improve this.

AM57 CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

A recording of the full meeting including Chief Inspector Swallows presentation can be found on at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0CxDHcbZQM&t=20s>