



Ramsgate Town Council

TOWN MEETING

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

Venue: The Oddfellows Hall, 142 High St, Ramsgate CT11 9TY

Date: Wednesday 30th March 2022 at 7pm

Attendees: Cllr Albon (Chair, Town Councillor)
Cllr Constantine (County Councillor)
Cllr Shonk (County Councillor)
Cllr Ashbee (Leader Thanet District Council)
Cllrs Ara, Austin, Crittenden, Huxley, Makinson, Moore, Rusiecki & Wing
(Town Council)
46 Residents
Mrs F Tomlinson (TDC Towns Project Manager)
Miss L Fidler (Town Clerk)

Apologies: Craig Mackinlay MP
Cllr Pugh (TDC Deputy Leader)
Town Councillors Nixey (Chair), L Piper & S Piper

In the absence of the Town Council's Chair, Cllr Albon was nominated to Chair the meeting.

AM47. MINUTES OF THE TOWN MEETING

The draft Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 31st March 2021 (*Minutes AM43-AM46*) were approved as accurate.

AM48. REPORT FROM RAMSGATE TOWN COUNCIL

The following reports were received on behalf of the Town Council for activities in 2021/2022.

- (i) The Worshipful the Mayor of Ramsgate, Cllr Ara, gave a report on her activities. This included:
- Monthly litter picking in the town.
 - £3000 of funding given to local charities.
 - Certificates of achievement given out.
 - A significant number of events attend to help promote Ramsgate and support businesses and organisations in the town.
 - A special congratulations was given to all the hard work by the community groups and organisations.
- (ii) Cllr Albon gave a report on behalf of the Chair of the Council (Cllr Nixey, which included:
- The Council has welcomed a new Clerk, Miss L Fidler.
 - The Council has set its strategic objectives and actionable steps (this document can be found on our website).

- The Council has declared a Climate Change Emergency.
- A particular 'thank you' was given to the Technicians, who undertake an awful lot of work in the community, that is not always seen.
- The future of Manston Airport continues to be a divisive matter within our community. Ramsgate Town Council's policy is that the proposed freight hub will be detrimental to the local community and there isn't the need in the country for this provision. We further agreed to oppose RSP's DCO open to us. However, we also acknowledge that there are members of the Council and the community who believe the freight hub will be hugely beneficial. Hopefully a final decision on this matter will be made soon, and fractious relations in the community can start to heal.
- A more detailed report can be found on our website.

(iii) Cllr Albon provided a report from the Finance & General Purposes Committee, including:

- The precept for 2022/2023 remains the same, there will be no increase.
- Councillors are fully supportive of the weekly market returning.
- The Council is looking for land to acquire for a Jubilee Forest.
- The Council has no plans to acquire the Granville Theatre.

Cllr Ashbee added the following:

In Kent there are three areas that benefitted from the latest Levelling Up Fund grants, two successful bids in Thanet and one in Ashford. All the projects need to encourage private investment (they should be reliant on government funding). The Thanet bids encompass 9 projects that are set in stone, the fine detail of how they are to be delivered is now to be worked out. There will be a dedicated website with all the information about what is happening.

TDC are the accountable body, and a scrutiny panel (not essential but a matter of good practice) will be set up to oversee delivery; a representative from the Town Council will be invited.

(iv) Cllr Austin will report on the Town Promotion Committee's activities, including:

- The Council continues to support most of the town events via grants.
- Promotion of Ramsgate via the Active Ramsgate and Visit Ramsgate initiatives.
- Provision of the Visitor Information Centre that aims to be open 7 days a week.
- Employment of a dedicated Town Promoter, who works with event organisers, local business, and advocates for the town centre on different funding streams.
- A successful volunteer recruitment day was organised. Volunteer groups that need assistance were encouraged to contact the town council.

(v) Cllr Albon reported on Radford House & Customs House Committee's activities, including:

- Planning permission to transform the building into a community centre has now been approved.
- The Council has secured a £58k grant from the Architectural Heritage Fund to develop the project.
- A Project Manager has been appointed.
- If anyone has any interest in the building or ideas for the future please let us know.

(vi) Cllr Makinson reported on the Planning & Infrastructure Committee's activities, including:

- In general Ramsgate Town Council:
 - i. Doesn't support businesses being changed to residential dwellings in the town centre (the merit of each application is considered though).

- ii. Is very concerned about inappropriate designs and signage within the Conservation Area.
 - iii. Does not support the removal of mature trees and hedging for development.
 - iv. Is very mindful of highways safety around developments.
 - v. Will always stress the importance of affordable housing within the community.
- The committee has also responded to various consultations throughout the year, such as the documentation related to the Local Plan, “Ramsgate Conservation Area” public consultation, and the “Future High Street Fund: Highway and Pedestrian Movement Scheme”.
 - The Council has embarked on a Highways Improvement Plan

AM49. RAMSGATE TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN

Ms Fiona Tomlinson (Towns Project Manager, Thanet District Council) gave a presentation on the Ramsgate Town Investment Plan.

AM50. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The following discussion ensued:

- Concern was raised by residents that the plan for the Port won't work, and the financial losses must be stopped. The focus on roll-on roll-off ferries was particularly challenged.
- TDC has £3.5million set aside for berthing, a decision on how to proceed will be made by the Cabinet (every expense over £750k returned to Cabinet for approval). A zoning map of the Port has identified that 70,000 square metres of the Port can be used for RORO operations.
- Government funded projects must provide a return for the district; if £20million is invested then TDC want to see £20million private investment.
- A business model involving Tall Ships was proposed by a resident. Cllr Albon
- Several concerns about staffing and management at TDC were raised. Cllr Ashbee responded that individual staff cannot be discussed in a public meeting. She will instruct the Chief Executive to come to speak to the public in Ramsgate to respond directly to the concerns raised. There is a process underway to address these problems and a recommendation from the Independent Monitoring Officer on how to proceed is expected in 4-6 weeks.
- A criticism was raised that “the Plan” is not a plan, it is a list of aspirations without timescales, costings, responsible officers, and no details as to how deliverables of the fund be measured. Cllr Ashbee responded that a TDC Scrutiny Panel will ensure that correct governance of Levelling Up projects is adhered and there is no slippage on finances and time. Funding by central government has not been received in this way before (where districts have to bid against each other) and it is a learning curve figuring out how to bid and deliver projects in this way. There will be no money spent without a business plan in place.
- Ongoing poor communication from TDC officers was raised, for example, not responding to FOI requests within the appropriate timescales.
- Several concerns about staffing at TDC were raised. Cllr Ashbee responded that individual staff cannot be discussed in a public meeting. She will instruct the Chief Executive to come to speak to the public in Ramsgate to respond directly to the concerns raised. A recommendation from the Independent Monitoring Officer on how to proceed is expected in 4-6 weeks.
- It was acknowledged that there are a number of problems at TDC with which everyone is in agreement. The different Parties and public now need to push in the same direction together to make changes.

AM51. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting was closed at 8.45pm.