



NOTES FOR POTENTIAL CANDIDATES FOR ELECTION TO

PORT ST MARY COMMISSIONERS ON THURSDAY 22nd JULY 2021

Is Being A Commissioner Worth It?

Yes it certainly is, because you are acting at a very local level. You can have an immediate effect on the residents and life of the village. The topics we deal with are often challenging but are always interesting.

We can and do 'make a difference' in numerous ways, many of which residents don't see or just take for granted.

Remember, though, that you are elected to represent and serve the residents of the village, generally not our own interests.

How Many and How long?

From 22 July there will be 7 members of the Board of Port St Mary Commissioners, so there will be 7 vacancies to be filled.

Commissioners are elected to serve, and are expected to serve, for 4 years. Mid-term by-elections are expensive for the ratepayers so it is preferable to serve the full term if you can!

How Much Does It Pay?

Commissioners are unpaid but do receive an attendance allowance of £30 for a full meeting, to cover the costs of being a Commissioner. You are not obliged to accept it, however, and some Commissioners do not whilst others donate it to charity.

What Are Commissioners Responsible For?

Within Port St Mary boundaries, we are responsible for:

Refuse collection, grass cutting, beach management and beach cleaning, Local Authority Housing (we have 122 houses), dog & litter byelaws, street lighting, abandoned vehicles, commissioner owned car parks, Garden of Remembrance,

play areas and open spaces, dealing with complaints, the Town Hall and offices, civic events such as the Celebration of Christmas and the Mona's Queen Annual Service. Oh, and of course the finances – within reason.

We do NOT manage the staff or their day-to-day activities. That is done by the Clerk. The Commissioners set the policy, give guidance and make the bigger decisions. The Clerk, ultimately supervised by the Board of Commissioners, implements those and manages the staff and day-to-day activities

Annually, we also set the domestic rates from which we derive most of our income.

We comment on planning applications and on Government consultations.

We are not responsible for roads and road maintenance, or other areas which are the responsibility of Government Departs or agencies (e.g. Education, Health, Post Office, Manx Utilities) although we can seek to influence them and our voice is usually listened to, but with varying degrees of success.

We provide representatives to serve on other committees and boards, such as the Southern Civic Amenity Site, The Southern Swimming Pool and sheltered housing.

Land/building assets

We own the Golf Course (leased to the Golf Club) and Pavilion, the public toilets, tennis courts, play area, croquet lawn, Town Hall, rifle club and depot building and various small parcels of land. We can, subject to specific conditions, purchase, sell and lease buildings and land.

Ongoing Projects

Important projects ongoing at the moment include: repairs to the tennis court fencing, to Happy Valley and to playground. There is also a rolling programme of replacement of street lighting.

Meetings

Meetings are normally held once per month on the 4th Wednesday of each month although additional meetings can be added if necessary. They are attended by all available members and chaired by the Chair of Commissioners, with the Clerk and the Housing Officer in attendance. If members miss too many meetings they can be removed.

Decisions are made by a clear majority of the Board although in the event of a tied vote the Chair may use their casting vote.

Members of the public can attend the first, public part of the meetings but not the second, private, part which deals with confidential matters. The private matters, by law, cannot be discussed outside Board meetings. You will probably find it very useful to attend some of the public parts of the meetings where you can listen but not speak. These start at 7.30 pm and will give you a very good idea of how the Board works and what topics it discusses.

The conduct of meetings and the conduct of Commissioners are governed by the Local Government Act and by our Standing Orders which are at:

<http://www.portstmary.gov.im/>

Board Papers

The Board papers for meetings are issued on the Friday before the meeting so you have 4 clear days to read and understand them. They are issued by email - and in hard copy unless you wish otherwise.

Meetings and the related Board agendas, minutes and papers are split into 2 parts – public and private. You will find it useful to look at the published public papers which are on the Port St Mary Commissioners website at:

<http://www.portstmary.gov.im/>

Typically it will take you 2-4 hours, once a month, to familiarise yourself with the papers

Meetings normally start at 7.30pm and last 2 to 2 ½ hours. Often, though, there are guest speakers who attend from 7 pm to deal with specific topics.

What Are We Trying To Achieve – The Board Strategy

The Board Strategy, published in 2019, sets out what we want to achieve and is a concise 3-page document which you can find at:

<http://www.portstmary.gov.im/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Strategy-Doc-June-2019.pdf>

Residents

Port St Mary residents may well approach you – usually informally in the street or at a social event – seeking information or assistance. Being able to help

someone is one of the most satisfying parts of being a Commissioner. If you don't know the answer, promise to find out and let them know – and keep your promise! If you cannot help, explain why and tell them who can, or might be able to help. Always remain polite and courteous and never ignore them or their request no matter what you personally think of it.

The Money

Just about all you could want to know about Port St Mary Finances is on the Port St Mary Commissioners website at:

<http://www.portstmary.gov.im/>

You will rapidly realise that our finances are quite tight and that, contrary to public opinion, we are not afloat with cash and reserves. Some of our most difficult decisions are around spending!

Want To Know More?

If you would like to talk to an existing Commissioner, we are all very happy to talk to you – please just get in touch! Alternatively, our Clerk, Hayley, will be happy to help.

The Board of Commissioners Port St Mary