

Minutes of the Extra Ordinary Meeting of the **ONCHAN DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS** held in the Boardroom, Hawthorn Villa, 79 Main Road, Onchan, on Monday 26th January 2026 at 6:00 pm.

Present:

Mr A Allen	(Chairman)
Mr S Wilson	(Vice Chairman and Lead Member for Housing)
Mr A Gibson	(Lead Member for Environmental and Technical Services)
Mr O Lockwood	(Lead Member for Finance and General Purposes)
Miss G Corkish	
Mr D Quirk	
Mr R Turton	

In attendance: Mr R Phillips (Chief Executive/Clerk)

C26/01/03/01

TO CHOOSE A PERSON TO PRESIDE IF THE CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN BE ABSENT

Not applicable.

C26/01/03/02

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS OF MEMBERS AND OFFICERS (in accordance with Standing Order 18.3)

The Chairman asked Members and Officer if they wished to declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests in relation to any agenda items due to be considered this evening.

The Chairman reminded Members and Officer that declarations of interests can be recorded now or when the agenda item is due to be considered during the meeting.

C26/01/03/03

BUSINESS REQUIRED TO BE DEALT WITH BY STATUTE BEFORE ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

C26/01/03/04

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES

1. Onchan Pleasure Park Bowling Green Charges – 2026/27 Financial Year

The following was considered In Committee and transferred to the public domain.

The Chairman asked if Mr Quirk wished to declare a non-pecuniary interest before considering the matter, as he had previously been a member of one of the bowling clubs based at Onchan Pleasure Park. Mr Quirk confirmed that he is not currently a member of either club based at the Park, and that he does not intend to declare a non-pecuniary interest.

The report of the Chief Finance Officer dated the 26th January 2026, copies of which having previously been circulated was considered.

The Chief Executive/Clerk advised the Board that the Authority's charges relating to income are reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process, as the charges form part of the District Rate considerations.

A discussion in relation to the following took place:

- Noted that the majority of the Board Members favour not increasing the bowling green charges for the 2026/27 financial year.
- A Member suggested that the charges be increased to reduce the cost to the Authority to provide the facilities, and to lessen the burden to ratepayers.

- Noted that the cost to the Authority to maintain the facilities is substantial, and that it would be unrealistic to ever raise the charges to a level that the greens would be cost-neutral for the Authority to provide.
- Highlighted that the Board resolved to support the Flat Green Bowling Club by increasing the maintenance budget for the green to support it hosting an international event in 2027.
- Suggested that an international event will provide positive publicity for the Park, and that members of the public may be encouraged to take up bowls while the international event is being held.
- Suggested that maintaining the current charges may also convince more people to join the clubs and to participate in the sport, which in turn would provide larger membership and more income for the Authority.
- Suggested that the Authority should work with both clubs to provide some publicity and increase awareness of the clubs and the facilities provided at Onchan Pleasure Park by the Authority; and
- Requested that training be undertaken with the Authority's kiosk staff regarding the use of the correct equipment when members of the public pay to use the greens, as it is noted that sometimes the incorrect equipment is being used.

Following a discussion, it was proposed by Mr Lockwood and seconded by Mr Gibson and unanimously **RESOLVED that there be no increase in the bowling green charges at Onchan Pleasure Park for the 2026/27 financial year.**

The Chief Executive/Clerk was requested to:

- Engage with both of the bowling green clubs based at Onchan Pleasure Park in relation to promotion of the clubs, and the bowling facilities offered at Onchan Pleasure Park; and
- Arrange for the kiosk staff employed for the 2026/27 season to obtain an understanding of the different bowling greens and equipment required when hiring the facility to members of the public.

2. 2026/27 Financial Year Budget and District Rate Setting

The following was considered In Committee and transferred to the public domain.

The report of the Chief Executive/Clerk dated the 26th January 2026, copies of which having previously been circulated was considered.

Following a request for information, the Chief Executive/Clerk advised the Board of the following information that was previously provided and considered at the Ordinary Board Meeting held on 19th January 2026:

- During 2025 and the start of 2026, the Board has considered reports and recommendations from officers in relation to expenditure considerations for the 2026/27 financial year. These considerations included:-
 - Proposed projects and purchases.
 - Changes to existing financial commitments.
 - Changes to income received by the Authority.
 - Debts; and
 - The current financial position of the Authority in relation to General Reserves.
- At present, the break event figures for 2026/27, based on including all of the previously resolved projects, purchases, and use of the General Reserves, are as follows:-
 - A 26 pence increase from 431 pence in the pound to 457 pence in the pound.
 - This equates to a 6.03% increase; and
 - No budgeted deficit to be funded from the General Reserves.
- It is to be noted that these figures could be reduced by:
 - Using the General Reserves to budget a deficit.
 - Delaying some of the projects and purchases resolved at earlier Board Meetings; or

- Cancelling some of the projects and purchases resolved at earlier meetings.
- An overview of the Authority's previous Rate Setting resolutions was provided as follows:

Financial Year	Pence in the Pound	Pence Increase	Percentage Increase
2025/26	431	20	4.87%
2024/25	411	38	10.19%
2023/24	373	27	7.80%
2022/23	346	20	6.13%
2021/22	326	3	0.93%
2020/21	323	5	1.57%
2019/20	318	6	1.92%
2018/19	312	0	0.00%
2017/18	312	2	0.65%
2016/17	310	3	0.98%
2015/16	307	17	5.86%
2014/15	290	15	5.45%
2013/14	275	4	1.48%
2012/13	271	5	1.88%
2011/12	266	0	0.00%
2010/11	266	0	0.00%
2009/10	266	4	1.53%
2008/09	262	22	9.17%
2007/08	240	11	4.80%
2006/07	229	14	6.51%

- An overview of the impact of rate increases in relation to various sized properties was provided as follows:

Property Type	Average Rateable Value	District Rate (Pence)	Cost Per Annum	Extra Cost Per Annum	Cost Per Month	Cost Per Week
ODC social housing - 1 bed flat	69	Current rate - 431	£297.39	-	£24.78	£5.72
		Proposed rate - 457	£315.33	£17.94	£26.28	£6.06
ODC social housing - 2 bed flat	84	Current rate - 431	£362.04	-	£30.17	£6.96
		Proposed rate - 457	£383.88	£21.84	£31.99	£7.38
ODC social housing - 2 bed house or bungalow	108	Current rate - 431	£465.48	-	£38.79	£8.95
		Proposed rate - 457	£493.56	£28.08	£41.13	£9.49
ODC social housing - 3 bed house or bungalow	120	Current rate - 431	£517.20	-	£43.10	£9.95
		Proposed rate - 457	£548.40	£31.20	£45.70	£10.55

2 to 3 bed house or bungalow	150	Current rate - 431	£646.50	-	£53.88	£12.43
		Proposed rate - 457	£685.50	£39.00	£57.13	£13.18
3 to 4 bed house or bungalow	200	Current rate - 431	£862.00	-	£71.83	£16.58
		Proposed rate - 457	£914.00	£52.00	£76.17	£17.58
Large house or bungalow	400	Current rate - 431	£1,724.00	-	£143.66	£33.15
		Proposed rate - 457	£1,828.00	£104.00	£152.33	£35.15

Income Impacts

The Chief Executive/Clerk advised the Board of the following in relation to the effects of income included in the draft budget:

- Increase in social housing administration allowance. A larger proportion of the rent will be kept by the Authority to cover the administration of providing the service.
- More income based on interest accrued from money invested in deposit accounts.
- More income due to Kenyons Youth Café no longer extending into the Meeting Room at the HUB, which would have meant a loss of hire charges; and
- Increased domestic and commercial refuse collection and disposal charges.

Committed Expenditure Impacts

The Chief Executive/Clerk advised the Board of the following in relation to the effects of committed expenditure included in the draft budget:

- Predicted salary pay awards for staff.
- Increased cleaning contractor costs as per the agreed retained contract.
- Manx Utilities electric, water and drainage tariffs.
- Telecom and internet tariffs.
- Printing costs.
- Increased IT contractor costs.
- Advertising costs.
- Internal audit costs.
- Credit card terminal costs.
- Parks Department's new equipment and repair costs.
- Increased grass cutting contract costs for public open spaces.
- Onchan Pleasure Park bowling green maintenance costs.
- Energy from Waste Facility disposal costs.
- Refuse vehicles bin weighing software.
- Eastern Civic Amenity Site operating costs.
- Commercial property maintenance costs.

Previously Resolved Projects and Purchases Impacts

The Chief Executive/Clerk advised the Board of the following in relation to the effects of proposed projects and purchases included in the draft budget:

- Repair works to the Authority's Hawthorn Villa office, including improved accessibility to the reception foyer.
- Replacement section of fencing and gates for the boating lake at Onchan Pleasure Park.
- Birch Hill street lighting replacements and improvements.
- Parks Department replacement tipper truck.
- Kenyons Youth Café extension at the HUB.
- Onchan Pleasure Park bumper boat repairs and safety improvements.
- Onchan Stadium drainage improvements; and
- Whitebridge Road street lighting installation.

Budget Savings

The Chief Executive/Clerk advised the Board of the following in relation to the savings included in the draft budget:

- The HUB refurbishment loan repayments end in January 2027.
- Removal of local authority general election costs. If a by-election is required during 2026/27, it is advised that the Board will have to consider funding it from the Authority's General Reserves.
- Reduction in staff training and recruitment.
- Removal of one-year funding to implement updated rate administration software.
- Removal of one-year funding to obtain more Laserfiche software licences for the Authority's manual staff to commence paperless work streams.
- Removal of one-year funding to replace play equipment at Ballachur Play Area.
- Reduced Christmas tree costs due to obtaining the services of a new supplier for 2026.
- Reduced Jubilee Garden maintenance at Onchan Pleasure Park.
- Removal of one-year funding for new mobile phones for manual staff to commence paperless work streams.
- Removal of one-year funding for the installation of CCTV at Onchan Library; and
- No allowance made for increased external audit fees. Once the Tynwald Auditor General undertakes a tender process for contractors, and costs are provided to the local authorities, it is advised that the Board may have to consider funding any budget shortfall from the Authority's General Reserves.

Options Available to Reduce the Rate Increase

The Chief Executive/Clerk advised the Board that at the Ordinary Board Meeting held on Monday 19th January 2026, it was requested that information be provided regarding reduced Rate options providing a 5% increase, instead of 6.03%. The following options were provided in relation to providing a rate increase of 4% and 5%:

- Deferring the previously resolved works to the Authority's Hawthorn Villa office, including improved accessibility to the reception foyer, could provide a saving of £13,000, equating to a saving of 1.67 pence in the pound.
- Delaying or deferring the Birch Hill street lighting replacements and improvements project to reduce loan repayments could provide a maximum saving of £68,000, equating to a maximum saving of 8.75 pence in the pound; and
- Deferring the purchase of a replacement Parks Department tipper truck could save £50,000, equating to a saving of 6.43 pence in the pound.

The Chief Executive/Clerk further advised that the following is not recommended in relation to the options available to reduce the Rate increase:

- The replacement section of fencing and gates for the boating lake at Onchan Pleasure Park, and the Onchan Pleasure Park bumper boat repairs and safety improvements not be deferred as they have associated safety implications; and
- That the Board does not continue to use the Authority's General Reserves to budget a deficit to reduce the District Rate. It is highlighted that the ongoing issues regarding street lights throughout the District that were first exposed in 2017 will require future investment, as well as the current Board wish to progress improvements at Onchan Pleasure Park, all of which will require financing.

A discussion in relation to the following took place:

- A Member suggested that the 2026/27 District Rate be increased by 5%, and that the Authority's General Reserves be utilised to fund the Onchan Pleasure Park fencing, the Hawthorn Villa repairs, and any other areas of increased expenditure.

- Another Member confirmed that they have previously been in favour of a 6.03% Rate increase, but now consideration should be given to a lower Rate increase.
- The majority of Members declared support for a 6.03% Rate increase; and
- Queries were raised regarding the Authority's current General Reserves.

The Lead Member for Finance and General Purposes advised the Board of the following:

- The level of rate increase resulting from a balanced budget is not so high as to justify utilising the Authority's General Reserves in this way.
- The Authority has agreed to fund the Kenyons Youth Café extension and replacement Refuse Tipper from the Authority's General Reserves, although this could also have been done via one off budget items.
- The proposal is equivalent to including these two projects in the budget and running a £100,000 deficit from the Authority's General Reserves.
- The proposed level of General Reserves is slightly less than three months' rate income and so should no longer be seen as excessive.
- A deferral of the commencement of the Birch Hill street lighting scheme could be used to reduce the District Rate. However, this is not ideal because the commencement of a construction project would normally be driven by operational considerations such as the availability of contractors and the ever increasing cost of materials.
- A deferral of the replacement tipper or the Keynons Youth Café extension could not be used to reduce the District Rate since these projects were agreed to be funded from General Reserves.
- Deferral or spreading of the Hawthorn Villa refurbishment could be used to reduce the District Rate, but by no more than 2 pence in the pound; and
- No other item is large enough to have even a 1 pence impact on the District Rate other than those already highlighted by the Chief Executive/Clerk.

Following a discussion, it was proposed by Mr Lockwood and seconded by Miss Corkish and **RESOLVED that the Authority's District Rate for the 2026/27 financial year be increased by 26 pence from 431 to 457 pence in the pound, which is equivalent to a 6.03% increase.**

For: *Mr Allen, Mr Wilson, Mr Lockwood, Miss Corkish and Mr Gibson*
Against: *Mr Quirk and Mr Turton*

3. Rate Discount

The following was considered In Committee and transferred to the public domain.

The report of the Chief Executive/Clerk dated 26th January 2026, copies of which having previously been circulated was considered.

The Chief Executive/Clerk advised the Board of the following:

- At the Extra Ordinary Meeting held on Monday 13th January 2025, the Board resolved that for the 2025/26 financial year, the Authority continues to offer a 4% discount to the ratepayers who paid their rates by the 30th June 2025.
- Highlighted that previous Boards have considered reducing the discount, but it is noted that the Boards resolved to continue to offer a 4% discount, as, on average per annum, 75% of the Authority's rateable income is received prior to the discount period ending.
- This income assists the Authority in relation to cash flow and allows for investment in deposit accounts to accrue interest to offset some expenditure; and
- If the Authority reduced the discount, potentially more income could be received, but alternatively, more ratepayers would not utilise a reduced discount, which would negatively affect the Authority's income and cash flow.

Following a discussion, it was proposed by Mr Lockwood and seconded by Mr Quirk and unanimously **RESOLVED that for the 2026/27 financial year, the Authority continues to offer a 4% discount to ratepayers who pay their Rates by the 30th June 2026.**

The Chairman requested that the Lead Member for Finance and General Purposes prepare a public statement on behalf of the Board regarding the Distract Rate increase and that this be provided to the Chief Executive/Clerk to circulate to the local democracy reporter, and published on the Authority's website and social media pages.

A Member requested that the statement also be circulated to the Board Members. The Chief Executive/Clerk confirmed he will circulate the statement once he has received it.

C26/01/03/05

ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

1. Meeting with the Minister for the Department of Infrastructure

The following was considered In Committee and transferred to the public domain.

The Chief Executive/Clerk advised the Board that he had been contracted by the Local Government Team on behalf of the Minister for Infrastructure, Mr Tim Crookall. It was noted that:

- The Minister wishes to arrange a meeting with the Board to discuss the Local Government (Amendment) Bill, and any other matters relating to the Department; and
- It was requested that proposed dates and times for a meeting be confirmed with the Local Government Team.

Following a discussion it was agreed that the Board would offer to meet with the Minister on Monday 2nd February 2026, commencing at 6:00 pm at the Authority's office at Hawthorn Villa.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6:37 pm.