

Onchan Commissioners – Meeting with Department of Infrastructure (DOI)

Date: Monday, 2 February 2026

Time: 6:00pm

Location: Onchan Commissioners Offices

Attendees

Onchan Commissioners

- Anthony Allen, Chair
- Oliver Lockwood
- David Quirk
- Robin Turton

Onchan Officers

- Ross Phillips

Department of Infrastructure

- Minister Crookall
- Helen Goldie

1. Opening Remarks

- Ross Phillips requested clarity whether the notes of meeting can be made publicly available following the conclusion of the meeting. Agreed by those in attendance that the notes can be made publicly available.
- Guests welcomed by the Chairman, and thanks given for arranging the meeting.
- The Chairman stated that it was hoped that the meeting was not intended to be a box ticking exercise and that the strength of feeling against Clause 5 within the Local Government (Amendment) Bill has driven a wedge between the Authority and the Department, in addition to recent claims of corruption within local authorities.
- The Minister emphasised the intention to build a more collaborative and transparent relationship between the Department of Infrastructure and Local Authorities.
- Acknowledged the significant concern and distrust generated by Clause 5 and expressed commitment to addressing allegations of corruption appropriately.
- Stated a desire to distance the current administration from approaches taken by the previous Minister.

2. Clause 5 and Legislative Concerns

- The Minister expressed understanding of the strong feelings surrounding Clause 5 and recognised why Local Authorities felt aggrieved.

- Work is ongoing to identify safeguards and consult with Local Authorities to ensure similar issues do not recur.
- Consultation safeguards remain within the clause, and any directive would ultimately require Tynwald approval.
- The department is exploring alternative solutions, including structural options such as forming a board for the Northern civic amenity site governance.

Comments from Commissioners

- Members questioned whether the Minister intended to halt progress on Clause 5.
 - The Minister noted that decisions are now largely out of his hands, with alternative options being explored.
 - Proposals and suggestions from Local Authorities are welcomed.
 - The Minister intends to report back to the House of Keys on **10 March**, following written updates to all LAs on proposed actions.
- Members expressed disappointment that:
 - Many believed Clause 5 would pass without adequate consultation.
 - Some MHKs suggested that Local Authorities had not discussed the Bill, which was strongly refuted.
 - The approach taken felt “blanket” and unfairly critical of all Local Authorities.
 - Clause 5 was viewed as undermining an otherwise reasonable piece of legislation.
 - Strong view expressed that Clause 5 should be withdrawn, allowing the broader Bill to progress, with proper consultation undertaken before any reintroduction.
 - The Northern civic amenity site issue continues to be used to justify wider changes; this should be resolved independently by end of March.

3. Collaboration and Service Delivery

Members highlighted historic issues around:

- Insufficient consultation on key policy matters.
- Delayed responses from Department officers.
- Challenges around service-level expectations and operational communication.

The Minister expressed commitment to:

- Improving communication channels.
- Supporting Local Authorities in delivering services more efficiently.

- Reducing red tape where possible.
- Agreed that:
 - Both the Department and Local Authorities should aim for efficient, community-focused service provision.
 - A future administration is likely to scrutinise opportunities for shared services and improvements more closely.

4. Waste Strategy

- Members reported that Local Authorities were not sufficiently consulted.
- Submission responses were not acknowledged or fed back.
- Minister noted the relevance of UK-linked legislation but acknowledged that not all aspects are applicable locally.
- The Minister confirmed that the current Waste Strategy has been paused and will be revisited with proper consultation.

5. Local Government Unit (LGU)

- Members raised concerns about resourcing (currently a team of two).
- Discussion around support for training and collaboration with Treasury.
- Members reported increasing delays in progressing petitions and infrastructure projects compared with earlier years.
- They noted difficulties engaging Department officers regarding drainage, utilities, and other operational matters.
- The Minister encouraged the Members to copy him directly into correspondence where responses had lapsed.

6. Housing Matters (Ballcurn Trust and Local Workstreams)

Members raised concerns about:

- Delays in progressing housing matters, including the potential purchase of the Ballacurn Trust units.
- The Minister confirmed the need for Attorney General approval of trust accounts dating back to 2023.

7. Legacy Commitments and Service Reviews

- Members made reference made to commitments dating back to 2015 (e.g., Phil Gawne’s proposals on devolving services).
- Annual reviews with Local Authorities have not taken place as expected.
- Issues such as gulley maintenance have been reported through *Report a problem.im* rather than via structured review processes.
- Agreement that more regular engagement is needed.

8. 20mph Speed Limit Proposals

- The Minister confirmed that the proposals now under consideration include:
 - Whitebridge to Fort North corridor.
 - School zones and residential areas (six-month trial period suggested).
- Advised that all work has been paused while legislation is reviewed, Returning to Local Authorities before any final decisions.
- Douglas is currently the focus, with a commitment to revisit Onchan once feasible.
- Members highlighted that consultation had been lacking and announcements had been directive rather than collaborative.

9. Service Level Standards

- Members referenced Chris Thomas’s work on a Maintenance Charter. The Minister confirmed the Highways Charter remains under consideration.
- Its purpose is to ensure consistent service standards across Local Authorities while allowing local variation above baseline requirements.
- Intention to develop clearer service standards for Department-provided functions. The Minister noted previous commitments for annual review but acknowledged that ministerial changes had disrupted this process.

10. General Issues Raised

- Members raised that the high turnover of Ministers has impacted consistency, though officers should provide continuity.
- Engagement with clerks and training opportunities needs improvement.
- Campervan management:
 - Concerns about larger vehicles parked adjacent to Onchan Park.

- Discussion on bylaws, enforcement, and potential matrix review.

11. Close of Meeting

- Meeting concluded at **6:50pm**.
- Agreement to maintain regular engagement and focus on achievable improvements ("easy wins").