

# David

FOR  
*Douglas North*

# ASHFORD

*Dear Elector,*

On Thursday you will be asked to choose a new member of the House of Keys for North Douglas.

The member you elect at this election will hold office for only a 15 month term until the General Election next year, but I believe the decisions that need to be taken during that time will be crucial to the future direction of our island and we therefore need people in the House of Keys who can start work from day one, there is no time for any new member to “learn the ropes”.

I have served for the last 7 years on Douglas Council therefore if elected, I can “hit the ground running” and start working on your behalf from day one. I also bring with me 20 years of private sector experience working across various industries including, financial services, insurance, retail and hospitality.

I am an optimist by nature and I truly believe that if government works hard and delivers for our island, then our best years do indeed lie in front of us. But in order for government to do that they need to once again start listening to the hopes and aspirations of our island’s population and truly once again become a government of the people. It is 152 years ago this year that Abraham Lincoln said at Gettysburg “government of the people, by the people and for the people” and I believe that phrase is as relevant today as it was then.

*David*



**21st May 2015**

**House of Keys By-Election**



# ABOUT ME & MY PRIORITIES FOR GOVERNMENT

I have been out canvassing door to door since I declared my candidacy on 24th March and will be continuing to do so up to and including the eve of poll. If I have not yet had that opportunity to speak to you in person I can only apologise and hope to have the opportunity to do so prior to polling day. Below I list a number of things about myself and what I believe should be our government's priorities.

## About Me

I was born in Douglas and I am 37 years old. I was educated at Ashley Hill Primary School and St Ninian's High School. I have lived on the Island all my life except for a period of five years between 1996-2001 when I was at university and briefly worked in the UK for two years. I live in the constituency, in Governors Hill.

## Professional life

If elected, I bring with me 20 years of private sector experience, having worked in various industries including financial services, insurance, retail and hospitality. I therefore have a wide variety of experience of the various crucial sectors that our economy relies upon.

## Previous political experience

I also bring with me 7 years of service as a Douglas Councillor for Victoria Ward. During that time I have served as Chairman of Housing, Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chairman of Public Works, Chairman of Commercial Lettings and a member of the Executive Committee. Therefore, if elected, I already have the political experience to be able to represent you from day one without having to "learn the ropes".

## My priorities for government:

- Economic growth and a 30 year plan
- Investing in frontline services rather than "vanity projects"
- Bringing more openness and transparency to government
- Creating a smaller, smarter government

## DIGNITY IN RETIREMENT & COST OF LIVING

- State Pension should be inflation linked.
- New personal allowance should be set at a level where no one will find themselves paying more tax than they do now.
- Free TV licence for over 75's should be restored.
- Bus charge changes should be rescinded.

The cost of living is continuing to rise and is starting to affect all of us both young and old. Many families are finding it harder to meet day to day expenditure and government charges continuing to rise are simply making matters worse. Government needs to remember that for every pound they take out of our pocket it is one less pound for us to spend in the wider economy. Pensioners have particularly been hit hard by recent changes. I oppose the changes to the free TV licence and the bus charges, I believe they save very little in the wider scheme of things but have a profound effect on individuals quality of life. I am also a firm believer that the state pension should be inflation linked whereby it will increase by a minimum of inflation each year.

While the changes coming in next year to the personal allowance and tax levels are a welcome streamlining of the tax system the allowance must be set at a level where no one is caught out paying more tax than they were before the changes.

## POLICING THE FRONT LINE

- Prioritisation of resources to front line policing.
- Continuation of community policing.

The police do a wonderful and hard job in ensuring the safety of our island. It is therefore imperative that government provides the resources to ensure that the job can be done properly. Between 2010/11 and 2013/14 the number of Constables within the police declined by 6% and the number of support staff fell by over 20%. The recent spate of burglaries, although unprecedented, show how important it is that the front line officers are given the resources needed to do the job effectively.

## OPENNESS & TRANSPARENCY

- Support and extend freedom of information.
- Extension of government documents available online.
- Less contracts with confidentiality clauses.

The public should expect as an automatic right to have access to information on how their money is being spent. Although the Freedom of Information Act will go some way to improving the situation, I believe it is still far too restrictive and should be widened in its scope. Alongside this the number of contracts government uses with confidentiality clauses should be reduced. The reporting portal on the government website should be extended with a catalogued document library system allowing for information to easily be located in one central space.

## SPENDING OUR MONEY WISELY & GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT

- Invest in getting the basics right rather than “grand” schemes.
- Make sure that schemes promoting economic development take priority.
- Outsource big schemes to experienced contractors.

There are still too many “vanity” projects being brought forward. One such recent example is the Douglas Promenade Scheme, which is going to cost up to £23million to turn the promenade into a “shared space” and relocate the horse trams onto the walkway. I do not agree with the relocation of the horse trams onto the walkway, I believe a walkway is just that for pedestrians and other users to enjoy. I also do not believe horses, pedestrians and children mix.

What is required is a scheme that fixes the main problem, the roadway itself and delivers us a useable and serviceable gateway to the island. At the same time as we’re being told we can afford to produce this shared space scheme, there is no money to spend on regeneration in Castle Street or Dukes Street, the part of our shopping area I believe needs it most, we are finding money to spend on these other ideas.

I want us to invest in getting the basics right, education, health and fixing the potholes on our estates and roads before burning money on “fresh ideas”.



## **GROWING THE ECONOMY & A 30 YEAR PLAN**

- Marketing ourselves as open for business in the UK.
- Look to encouraging research and development sectors into the island.
- Develop a long term 30 year plan.

The only true way our island is going to recover from the VAT bombshell is by growing our economy. I believe that there are many new and innovative industries out there that could find themselves a long term base in our island. We need to be more aggressive in our marketing strategy within the UK. Over the past four years I believe we have been very good at marketing ourselves further afield for investments that will pay off in the long term but now we need to focus closer to home as well. We need to ensure that any economic growth is diversified growth so that as an economy we are not overly reliant on one or two particular industries. This can only truly be achieved if government develops a long term 30 year plan as to where they want the island to be.

## **ENSURING EDUCATION & HEALTH ARE PRIORITY SERVICES**

- Supporting a health service free at the point of delivery.
- Ensuring education is accessible to all regardless of background.

It is vital that we retain a health service that is accessible, modern and free at the point of delivery. Available funds must be prioritised for front line services and patient outcomes measured. We must also ensure that the terms and conditions offered to staff encourage the best and the brightest to come to and remain on our island. It is also essential that we have an educational system that can be accessed by all regardless of background. Our education system must first and foremost provide a system designed for the needs and aspirations of our children and ensure that no child is left behind.

# SMALLER SMARTER GOVERNMENT

- Less departments and Ministers.
- Local authority reform, reducing from 24 to 5 authorities.
- Review of size and scope of government.

Government is still far too large for an island our size. Over the years as the VAT income rose instead of investing in infrastructure and development the government invested in expanding the workforce. In 1998/99 the total number of people employed by the government was 6551, barely six years later this had risen to 7584. Although the government has started to tackle the problem further work still needs to be done and we need to ensure that government is of an appropriate size and works more efficiently.

There are too many government departments and Ministers. The current set up of eight departments only encourages those departments to work in isolation and develops a silo mentality. This also means that including the Chief Minister there are 9 Ministers, which is far too many for efficient decision making to take place and along with collective responsibility stifles democratic debate.

Local authority reform also needs to be undertaken as a priority. I believe the current structure of local authorities is no longer fit for the 21st Century. The numbers should be cut from 24 to 5, namely North, South, East, West and Douglas. Until this is done Government cannot truly decentralise services such as Building Control and even local rate collection itself until there are authorities of an appropriate size to take on these services.

## WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE THIRD SECTOR

There are still many day to day tasks being undertaken by government that would be better provided by the third sector. Government needs to engage with the third sector and where there are appropriate facilitators on the ground, tasks should be outsourced along with the funding. The experts on the ground are the best option for delivering the services those in need require.

## **PUBLIC SECTOR PENSIONS**

- **Lack of sustainability threatens our ability to honour existing commitments.**
- **£578 per head of population spent honouring commitments this year.**
- **£2.4 billion deficit.**
- **New entrants should move to a defined contribution scheme.**

**The current arrangements for public sector pensions are unsustainable in the long term. This year the cost of public sector pensions, after taking into account contributions, will be equal to £578 per head of population. That is more per head of population than the government spends on Police, Fire, Prisons, Waste Management, Public Transport, Heritage Railways and Sports combined. The government currently faces a public sector pensions deficit of £2.4billion. This lack of sustainability in the longer term puts at risk not just governments finances, but also, in my opinion, their ability to honour commitments already given to existing employees.**

**The scheme should be moved to a defined contribution scheme for new entrants and the level of lump sums payable to those in the higher grade positions being frozen at a set level.**

## **MEANS TESTING**

- **Review of the means testing system.**
- **Means testing needs to be based on current income.**

**The current means testing arrangements, especially in the area of child benefit, are not working correctly. The incomes used to calculate the amounts payable are currently being based on income from two years ago. This is completely unfair, and puts at a disadvantage the very people means testing is supposed to help. The whole point of means testing should be to assess someone's current situation not their prior position.**

## MY PLEDGES TO YOU

I am not a member of a political party and if elected will remain as an independent candidate. Therefore, I would not be bound by any party's policy and would be free to represent your interests fully and freely when the need arises.

I will always assess any decision or policy on its merits. If I believe a policy is right and in the long term interest of our island I will vote for it. Where I think it is wrong, I will actively campaign and vote against it.

First and foremost, I will be a constituency member for the whole constituency. Should the constituencies needs conflict with any government appointment I may hold, I will resign that post. The same applies should any conflict arise between any position I may hold and what I believe is in the best interests of our island. I will not simply support something because the government policy of "collective responsibility" states I should.

I would hold regular constituency surgeries on an open door policy so that as constituents you can easily raise any concerns with me.

Also, I will issue at least one constituency newsletter every six months. This will allow me to update you on events and give you the necessary information so you can hold me to account for any decisions I may make.

I would be an MHK that stays in touch with you throughout the term of office, not just at election times.

**Need a lift on polling day?  
Contact me on 427232 or e-mail [dashford@manx.net](mailto:dashford@manx.net)**

*For a fresh approach*

***Vote***

**ASHFORD**