

Leonard Singer – Ramsey

Political Questions (2016)

Why do you want to be a member of the House of Keys?

I have represented the people of Ramsey on the Commissioners and in the House of Keys for over 20 year. We are facing a difficult 5 years with many new members. I welcome new members and new ideas and feel I can contribute with my experience to bring continuity and stability.

If you were elected, what would your priorities be on a national level?

My delegated responsibilities within the Department of Economic Development have enabled me to network with the decision makers not only here but in other countries, successfully boosting the Island's visibility thus creating new trade opportunities. The continuing growth in our economy is essential if we are to be able to solve the difficulties we are facing. This is an absolute priority.

To seek a long term viable solution to the public sector pensions crisis.

To encourage reforms to, and seeking committment from, everyone working in the health service to streamline services, make savings, reduce waste and achieve efficiencies to ensure we have a first class and affordable service.

If you were elected, what would your priorities be on a constituency level?

To see the re-establishment of the Drugs Squad if the dealers at all levels are to be removed.

To have a fair rating system introduced

To follow the main priorities of any government to build a secure future for our children and grandchildren, protect and create jobs and look after our senior citizens and the vulnerable.

Firstly, continuing to keep in touch with and be available to the people of Ramsey to help with their questions and problems. To continue to hold monthly political surgeries at the Town Hall.

To campaign for the Department of Infrastructure to get 'back to basics' and repair our pavements and roads and renew the road markings.

To make local planning decisions the responsibility of the Ramsey Commissioners not a Committee in Douglas.

To transfer more local responsibilities from central government to the Ramsey Commissioners.

To encourage new businesses to settle in

How well do you think the present administration has handled the major challenges of the past five years?

Ramsey.

To support the Queens Pier Restoration Trust in its efforts to refurbish the Pier.

To ensure a suitable and acceptable use for the Courthouse building such as a community centre.

To support the continuing development of Ramsey Cottage Hospital recognising its importance not only to the northern community but to the whole island.

The present administration has failed the people in important matters. It has failed in its promises to balance the budget, to solve the public sector pension crisis, to introduce a fair rating system or provide adequate pre-school provision. The government has been inward looking and has failed to communicate with the people.

The present administration has been vigilant in combating the continual attacks on our reputation and integrity from international bodies. We have to continue to counter these threats working with the other Crown dependencies facing similar challenges.

What are the main political and social issues facing the Isle of Man in the next five years?

The uncertainty of Brexit,
Balancing the budget and rebuilding the reserves
Sea and air services
Solving the public sector pension crisis, finding a viable solution to ensure employees will receive a pension in the future.
Looking after the increasing proportion of older people in the community and helping them to stay in their homes
Recognising the issues of mental health problems in the community and supporting the sufferers and their carers and protecting the vulnerable
Availability of affordable housing

How would you deal with the challenges referred to in the previous answer?

There is need for a positive 5 year plan defining government priorities which all ministers adhere to irrespective of the departments they head. There can be no 'pet' projects but a recognition that government has to ensure we get value for money, greater efficiency, and be entrepreneurial.

In relation to negotiations on Brexit, whilst we have to rely on the UK Government negotiating on our behalf and whilst accepting the assurance that our interests are part of those talks we have to keep close to the negotiators to ensure this is happening. This, in my opinion, is an important responsibility of the next Chief Minister.

How would you deal with the issue of public sector pension reform and the public sector pension deficit?

It is generally accepted that employees will have to pay more and receive less. The Government policy is reliant on the economy continuing to grow at 3% annually for the next 40 years or so. That would mean 70 years of continuous growth. How can that be a reasonable assumption? With a group of other members we asked many questions of government and the Public Sector Pension Authority in regard to options. The replies were not forthcoming and we moved an amendment in Tynwald that suitable expert pension advisors reviewed our system and laid out those options. The Government opposed that amendment, pushed through the 'cost envelope' (defining the % paid by the employer and employee) then said we will also have to seek expert advice. The government action could well have limited the options that must be taken to ensure that public sector pensions are sustainable and will be guaranteed in the future.

What has changed in the past five years for Isle of Man residents for the better? (Please give examples)

More people in employment and high quality jobs created within business sectors, particularly the finance, e-business and manufacturing sectors.

Schools recognising that their success is

What has changed in the past five years for Isle of Man residents for the worse? (Please give examples)

not solely judged on exam results and working together with business, opening career opportunities for young people not going to university.

The major banks reluctance to support home buyers and businesses seeking support.

More people experiencing fuel poverty
Hospital waiting lists reducing only minimally

Is the Isle of Man too reliant on any one sector of its economy?

The Isle of Man now has over 20 different business sectors and this has been the reason for the many years of continuous growth (compare other Crown Dependencies) The e-business/IT/aircraft registry/space are amongst those sectors which are expanding and providing skilled new jobs. We have to continue to promote those sectors of our economy which attract inbound investment and create more jobs, stimulating growth.

If you feel it is, how would you further diversify the Manx economy?

Whilst we have a diverse economy there is a need to seek further successful sectors. As an example, the space sector is extremely buoyant and with the proposal to build a satellite ground station this has brought opportunities to develop a media presence which will

Are you in favour of increased independence from the United Kingdom?

produce employment. The Economic Development Department has to be seeking new opportunities to further expand our economy and develop policy to encourage university graduates to return to work on the Island.

If you are, in which areas?

Not at this time but we have to be seeking to expand our business connections with other countries. I have been involved directly in developing opportunities with South Africa and China.

Are you in favour of parliamentary reform in the Isle of Man?

see answer above

Yes

If you are, which aspects of the parliamentary system would you change?

The Legislative Council. Whilst there have been several attempts to elect the Council by public vote, these have failed. I would restrict the responsibilities of the Council to purely reviewing the legislation sent from the House of Keys. The Council members could speak in debate in Tynwald but not have a vote. The Council members would not be members of Departments. Their remuneration would be suitably

Who should have the responsibility of electing the Chief Minister?

reduced.

The elected members of the House of Keys.

Public election would not work as exemplified in the UK where the labour party leader is supported by the members but not by parliamentary colleagues. Similarly here, a publically elected Chief Minister might not receive support from Tynwald members for his/her declared policies and could not form a government.

Are you in favour of the nationalisation of air and/or sea services to and from the Isle of Man?

No, it is not up to Government to run such services. Political interference would be detrimental. In relation to sea services we should not 'bend' to Steam Packet Company pressures for an extension of the User Agreement. I supported the Tynwald amendment for a select committee to investigate all aspects of the company's operation.

In regard to Air services, these are fragile and airlines can discontinue or change the service at will. Government, working with Travelwatch, needs to be engaging with airlines so that they fully understand they have responsibilities to our community and must protect our essential airlinks.

Are you in favour of renewable energy projects in Manx territorial waters?

Yes.

Are you in favour of an increase in means testing for financial support and/or services provided by Government?

Yes. It was unfortunate that government abandoned plans early in this session and now seems to be looking at one test for all areas. Without knowing the details it is difficult to see how this would work fairly.

If you are, in which areas?

See above