

Please Vote for

Dr Alex Allinson

The time for change has come





Dear Tynwald Member

The recent General Election has seen further evolutionary change to our parliament which now more truly reflects the population we serve. We now have greater diversity of age, gender and skills throughout Tynwald than ever before. Now is the time to use this energy to achieve long lasting progressive social change.

In this statement I have tried to set out the foundations for a programme for the next administration which will tackle some of the inequalities in our society whilst safeguarding and improving the lives of all members of our community.

But to achieve this we need to first confront some of the issues within our government and our parliament. Government must be more responsible and accountable.

I aim to reset Government's relationship with the media, to improve communication with our community and ensure it is genuinely two way rather than dependent on manicured press releases. We need to re-establish regular face to face briefings to ensure adequate public scrutiny.

I believe we need a new style of leadership which is more open, more inclusive and less defensive. Our next Chief Minister needs to bring Tynwald Members back together after lockdowns and virtual isolation and help heal some of the divisions this has caused. They need to allow all members to define a Programme for Government which reflects our common vision whilst being clear for the public to understand and which can be delivered on time and on budget.

I will ensure our next Council of Ministers will reflect the changing face of our parliament and harness the best skills available. Departmental membership should be limited with the creation of the role of a Deputy Minister directly responsible for certain policy areas who will be expected to answer parliamentary questions and develop their own expertise. I will commit to a review of the extent of collective responsibility and aim to undertake a significant reshuffle in 2024. As parliamentarians we need to have the opportunities to further develop our skills and experience to represent our constituents whether that be through scrutiny or the application of government policy. But we need to strengthen our system of consensus politics to ensure we achieve the outcomes we want for our island.

I will make it easier for Members to take on roles and explore options such as job-sharing at Ministerial level. Sittings should be more aligned with school holidays and the hours we work should not automatically exclude those who have caring responsibilities for others.

I believe our next Chief Minister has to build a team to take our island forward. I am fully prepared to take risks and not be afraid of failure but be accountable for it. I will strive to ensure all Members are able to reach their potential and get the chance to deliver on a common vision for all the people on the Isle of Man.

I am committed to social change and to building a fairer, more equal and more sustainable society. That is why I have decided to stand as our next Chief Minister and why I now ask for your support.

Drawing up the priorities for the next Programme for Government needs to involve all of us to create a common vision which we can then share with our constituents. We need to be realistic but ambitious. The next five years will undoubtedly be challenging, but together we have the chance to achieve so much.

Best wishes,
Alex Allinson

It should not be the role of the next Chief Minister to set their own manifesto and programme for the new Government. Their role is to help create a collective vision taking into account the views and aspirations of all Members. They then need to help select a team to take this vision forward whilst making sure the parameters of collective responsibility allow for effective government whilst not stifling personal principles. I believe in a socially progressive administration committed to delivering outcomes which will improve the lives for those living on our island.

Intergenerational Fairness

The worldwide pandemic has exposed the inequalities and problems in our society. Whilst we are a relatively wealthy nation many struggle to make ends meet and sudden illness or unemployment can plunge them into debt and financial hardship. This can affect young people, working families, pensioners; in fact any of us.

Fairness to all generations is essential to preserve and enhance the community spirit and sense of solidarity we have. The Resolution Foundation have explored this area extensively and we have our own white paper from 2019. Now is the time to bring forward changes to improve the lives of the people who only recently voted us in.

Employment and Pay

Access to training, lifelong learning and re-skilling can help support people getting better jobs. I will ensure that the recently accepted 5 year DESC Strategy is adequately funded with improved access to part-time and subsidised courses.

The Childcare Strategy Group report is due and will trigger a debate on the provision of affordable and accessible pre-school care for all. I will ensure that the island is once again seen as family friendly and is able to retain and attract people of working age to make it their home.

As a MHK I was part of the Committee investigating how Zero Hours contracts are used locally. I will commission legislation which provides better job security with statutory sick pay, maternity, shared paternity benefits and bereavement leave. These should also be made available to the self-employed.

I will fully support the move to gradually increase the minimum wage to match the living wage. Similarly, benefits especially Employed Persons Allowance need to be at a more realistic level and be linked to the cost of living on the island.

It is not acceptable that some families have to rely on the Foodbank. Child benefit should be increased with the same rate for the first and subsequent children and extra support given for those on low incomes to afford school uniforms.

Our responsibility to those leaving care must be recognised through a clear Corporate Parent Strategy and I will commit to adequately funding the futures of some of the most vulnerable young people in our community.

Housing

Young people are increasingly unable to afford their own homes and find it very difficult to save enough for a deposit whilst also paying rent. The First Time Buyers scheme is not working for them and I will bring this up to date in terms of income and price thresholds. A mortgage deposit guarantee scheme should be consulted on with lenders and costed. We need to measure and monitor key metrics including income inequality, house cost to earnings ratio and average earnings to that we can ensure our policies are effective.



I will deliver a comprehensive Housing Strategy. This needs to be implemented by a Deputy Minister who will also be responsible for planning policy reform to ensure we can optimise the use of brownfield sites and partner with the Manx Development Agency to offer rent-to-buy and mid-rent options.

I will ensure that there are enough planning enforcement resources to make the system fair again. The “secret list” of historic buildings should be published and our heritage protected in an open and transparent way whilst not stifling sympathetic conservation or redevelopment.

Affordable housing must include the rental sector. Following the completion of the Landlord Registration Bill I will start consultation on more secure tenancy arrangements, deposit protection and also ways to support the public/private rental market.

This new administration must bring in a reform of the rates system within the first 100 days. Most of the work has already been done on alternative schemes and we need to debate a fairer system clearly explained to our constituents. This will be tied to local government reform which must swiftly follow.

Pensions

There should be easier access to pensions for the self-employed with a thorough review of the National Insurance system and the ability of SMEs to join a comprehensive defined contribution scheme with auto-enrolment.

Significant work has already been done to address the cost of the public sector pension scheme but I will ensure this is audited and regularly reviewed. It is essential that the Island continues to be able to retain and recruit the best nurses, physiotherapists, midwives, doctors, teachers, engineers and other front line staff. I believe that through dialogue and negotiation we will be able to create a fairer system where all contribute, with the long term cost to the tax payer being minimised.

The Economy

Despite the human and financial cost of the viral pandemic we are now at a pivotal point to decide the nation’s future. Rather than cuts and austerity, I believe now is the time to invest in health, education and our infrastructure.

The KPMG Economic Strategy review is due and I will commit to implement this and regularly review our progress in growing and diversifying business on our island.

I will start an analysis of the current “open skies” policy given the seismic changes in the aviation industry and guarantee accessible and affordable routes to economically important destinations such as London.

I will ensure that TT 2022 re-launches our island as the road racing capital of the world.

As they did during the last 18 month, different parts of government must work together to reduce bureaucracy and speed up the opportunities for innovation and investment. I will establish cross-departmental budgets to deliver clear objectives in the same way as the ERG was able to quickly respond to the challenges of COVID.

Better scrutiny of Government spending is essential with reviews of procurement and the tender processes. I will strengthened political input to Treasury and encourage a robust PAC membership.

I will change the way the 2021-22 budget is devised so all Members can see the bids from Departments and understand the priorities for Government and the allocation of taxpayers money. Zero based budgeting will be established in areas of statutory service provision.

I will create a major project unit which uses the best resources from DoI, Treasury and the private sector but which delivers our objectives on time and within realistic budgets. The structure of DoI needs further review to create operational delivery units such as highways and transport

Education

It is a real honour to be the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture. I have worked closely with our schools and excellent staff to try and overcome previous problems, reset the relationships with the teaching profession and the culture of the department and create a clear five year strategy which has been laid before Tynwald.

Government is investing an extra £1.5 Million this year to help those with additional needs from primary school upwards. I value the role our teachers have in educating the next generation and playing such a vital part in our society.

I have consulted on an AEN code and will back this up with an independent Educational tribunal. This will be part of a new Education Bill formed through consultation and consensus with all stakeholders.

We will continue to expand the use of technology in our schools with a mix of blended learning, more online resources, as well as developing new courses and choosing the most suitable exam boards to partner with.

The scope for vocational training will expand both at secondary schools and UCM to provide choice for students, skills needed by employers and more job opportunities for people of all ages through lifelong learning programmes.

We have successfully broken down the barriers for students attending universities in England but will update the student award regulations to enable more to live and study on Island. I will commit to schemes that use paying off tuition fees as an incentive for graduates to return to our island.

By building closer collaborative links with employers we will revitalise and expand the range of apprentice opportunities for those leaving school, developing their skills while they work.

I have asked that building condition surveys are updated to ensure we can prioritise improvements and plan for new schools where they are most needed. I have also started a comprehensive review of catchment areas to enable greater parental choice.

Health

It is vital to increase investment in primary care. The last 18 months have shown the importance of local services and the need for more appointments with a variety of healthcare professionals. I will ask Locate.im to target GP recruitment and also review their current pay.

As parliamentarians we need regular updates from Manx Care and to be assured of adequate political oversight from DHSC to ensure that strategies and policies are being delivered.

I will ensure that patients have access to NICE approved drugs and the role of the Clinical Recommendations Committee is reviewed.

I will commission a Mental Health Recovery Strategy. Half of all mental health disorders (including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder) start by the age of 14, and three quarters by 24. This is why early intervention is essential. I will establish a shared budget between DHSC and DESC to enable school based and community assessment and therapy provision which is accessible to all families and also recognises the wellbeing of teachers and school staff. Clear pathways for referral to CAMHS will be established and unacceptable waiting lists abolished.

Our capacity and mental health legislation will be updated as a priority and I will revamp our legislative programme.

I will restore the mental health worker support to the Constabulary to ensure crises can be addressed and dealt with through effective follow-up. This will be part of an overall suicide prevention strategy.

Many older people are fearful of the cost of social care and that they might be forced to sell their own home to afford it. I will ask Treasury to analyse the cost of bringing in a lifetime contribution cap as a first stage. We need an adequately funded social care system integrated with our NHS to reduce hospital admissions and enable earlier discharges. Carers must be supported and valued through access to adaptation funding and free respite provision.

I will not shy from targeting tax increases which are ring-fenced to adequately fund our NHS. I will review the upper thresholds for NI contributions and reform the over complex system we have on the basis of the PWC report.

Drug policy

I will reverse the decision to not allow import licenses for medicinal cannabis and ensure that this is available on prescription through registered pharmacies.

I will re-classify Cannabis as a Class C drug immediately as a step to decriminalisation and individuals granted a license to grow a small number of plants at home for personal use.

DHA are commissioning work on the harms caused by drugs to our society. Drug abuse needs to be treated as a medical problem rather than as a criminal issue. I will provide extra resources to the Constabulary to tackle the importation of illegal drugs to our island and break "county lines".

I will commission a strategy to legalise the recreational use of cannabis within a firm regulatory framework and also bring in minimum pricing for alcohol.

Legislation

I will ensure that a new Animal Welfare Bill will be the priority for the next DEFA Minister.

Whilst we have extra protections through the Sexual Offences, Domestic Abuse and Justice Reform Bills passed by the last house we lack any coherent strategy for dealing with violence against women.

I will align statutory housing provision for people made homeless with increased access to trauma counselling and financial support.

I will ensure that age appropriate sex and relationship education which concentrates on respect and issues of consent is a core part of our school curriculum.

I will ensure the Judiciary, Constabulary and legal system receive training on coercive and controlling behaviour, how it is part of domestic and sexual abuse and that this is shared with jurors.

I will establish SARC provision as soon as possible with medical, forensic and ongoing counselling and support available to all at the point of need. I will create a specific budget for this, aligning resources from DHSC, DHA and the third sector.

We need to decide on the benefits of having Government as a single legal entity once and for all and continue the reform of the structure and function of the way we provide services through the One Public Service Project.

Thanks to Peter Killey for the use of some of his Tynwald images.

Please get in contact with me if you would like to discuss any aspects of the role of Chief Minister and the future of our great nation.

I am available on 07625427426 and alex.allinson2@gov.im and would be happy to meet with you at any time.