



The Little Book of Government Reform

*Making a government that works
for you*

A 2016 General Election Manifesto
By Chris Robertshaw - Douglas East



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PERSONAL PROFILE



I was first elected to the House of Keys in 2010 and then again at the general election in 2011. I am married to Joan and have two children Mark and Helen and five grandsons Joe, Jack, Jake, Bobby and Sam.

I have served as Minister of Social Care where I instigated an in depth housing review, engaged in a reappraisal of the benefits system in conjunction with Treasury and commissioned an external review of our children and family services. For a short period I was Minister of Community Culture and Leisure during the period of its closure and transfer of functions before being appointed as Minister of Policy and Reform. I have also been Chairman of the Planning Committee, Chairman of the Civil Service Commission and Chairman of two Select Committees – one looking at our jury system and one looking at funding for nursing care homes for the elderly. I have also served on the Tynwald Standards and Members' Interests Committee. I have steered various bills through the House of Keys including the Freedom of Information Bill and the Regulation of Care Bill. With regard to key government initiatives I was responsible for both instigating the work which resulted in the creation of the £50m enterprise scheme designed to encourage businesses to start up and grow and initiating the Douglas Master Plan concept designed to trigger renewed interest in major reinvestment in lower Douglas.

Prior to entering politics I had a successful 35 year career in tourism as Managing Director, Company Secretary and Registrar of Sefton Hotel Plc up to 2005 when it changed hands and thereafter went in another direction. I also set up what became a well respected ABTA/ATOL licensed incoming tour operation serving our local tourism businesses and I still have a sound family business providing other services to the hospitality sector. Whilst in the private sector I also served as a director at different times on a number of voluntary boards including the then Hospital Administration Committee and two local charities, The Manx Housing Trust and Housing Matters as I have a particular interest in the importance of good quality housing for all.

I came into politics because I wanted to help ensure the Island flourished and I believed I had something to contribute and I believe I still do. Should you choose to re-elect me I would bring considerable experience of the private sector, a significant knowledge of the public sector and, as I hope you might agree once you have read my manifesto, a clear vision of how to tackle the very real challenges that lie ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Robertshaw', written in a cursive style.

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INTRODUCTION

I have entitled my manifesto '**the Little Book of Government Reform**' for good reason.

Despite the often repeated statement that 'we have balanced the operating account' in truth the biggest challenges, namely the need to increase spending in real terms on health, social care and education in the coming years, remain unmet. The forecasts available to us clearly show that once the public sector pension liability has been addressed ***there is no additional money left for these crucial areas.***

- ***It is self evident that increasing our efforts to grow the economy will remain extremely important but this alone will not solve our budgetary problems and it is quite wrong to pretend it would.***
- ***Passing out ever more increases in general charges to the public in order to balance the books is causing growing distress for those on lower and middle incomes.***

- ***Raising taxes in an environment when our competitors are going in the opposite direction could very well cause serious damage to our economy and therefore to our jobs, incomes and well being.***

During my time in politics I have firmly come to the view that if we are going to deliver high quality health and social care for all and first class education for our children, whilst still remaining a tax competitive jurisdiction with a strong economy, we are going to have to think differently. That is why this manifesto is different.

It is often said that focusing on the size and structure of government is nothing more than vote losing navel gazing and that what people really want is to be able to choose particular policies. You may very well feel this way but in this manifesto I will argue that the only way we will be able to find the money to do the things that you wish to see happen is to make government smaller and smarter and that the only way this can happen is if a strong message comes from you – the voter - on the 22nd September.

WHY WE NEED A SMALLER 'UNIFIED' GOVERNMENT



Incredible as it sounds there is no such thing as the 'Isle of Man Government'. In legal terms we have eight independent autonomous departments each with its own minister, departmental political members and chief executive often pursuing their own individual agendas. Working in 'silos' like this often results in conflicting priorities and clashes of interest. It also means changes of direction every time there is a change of minister, quite regardless of the fact that it is still the same administration. This is a top heavy and expensive process as well as an incoherent and clumsy way of developing policy.

By way of example many local authorities elsewhere with much larger populations than the Isle of Man and very considerable budgets have moved to having only one chief executive who then works with his or her divisional heads to deliver an agreed set of centrally established and co-ordinated political priorities that the elected representatives have agreed best respond to the will of the electorate.

In our system the will of the electorate gets lost in a fragmented, top heavy silo based system.

To rectify this we need one single unified government with the number of departments reduced from eight down to three policy hubs and two coordinating bodies. The three policy hubs would be made up of one focused on growing the economy, one on

environment and infrastructure and one focused on you and your family, co-ordinating health, social issues and education. The two co-ordinating bodies being the Treasury for financial control and the Cabinet Office which would have three main elements to it: one focused on external affairs, one coordinating the work of the local authorities and one coordinating the work of the three main policy hubs.

In order to enable these hubs to function I believe that the first and top priority of the next administration is to declare its determination to become what is called 'a single legal entity'. In other words one government instead of eight autonomous departments.

WHY WE NEED SMARTER GOVERNMENT



There is no way to soften the following comments so I will say it as I believe it is. Our current system of administration is bureaucratic, old fashioned, 'siloe'd' and not fit for future purpose. As a consequence it is insensitive to individual need and very expensive to run. We cannot go on like this.

As a matter of some urgency we need to streamline and modernise our systems so that we direct money away from unnecessary back office functions to front line services such as health, social care and education. We must also personalise government services to you. As Baroness Martha Lane Fox put it in her 2015 annual Dimpleby Lecture:

'We need to take money from the cold hand of administration and put it in the warm hands of teachers and nurses'.

We will not have to reinvent the wheel to achieve this as jurisdictions all over the world are trying to modernise their governmental services through digital inclusion so there are already various excellent examples of good and best practice that we can bring together, adapt and refine for our needs and make them our own.

Our big advantage is that we are a small jurisdiction that can be fleet of foot in adopting digital inclusion given a real will to do it. Nothing would give greater confidence to business investors in the Isle of Man than evidence that we are determined to deliver high quality government services whilst still retaining a tax competitive position.

I have consistently said that the amount of investment going into enabling a smarter government is inadequate – this must change.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NEEDS AND MEANS TESTING

The support systems we still apply were first devised, in the main, in a different era after the Second World War. Today their delivery looks crude and the assessments clumsy. As a consequence genuine and significant need is sometimes missed or ignored, thus blighting individual lives whilst elsewhere money is spent unnecessarily. In the years of plenty it was easy for politicians to simply throw money at issues but finding ourselves in leaner times is no excuse for failure. If we are genuinely to protect and re-enable the vulnerable a great deal of work is needed to refine and target delivery.

The importance of knowing, understanding and responding to individual need must lie at the very heart of government reform for it is the very essence of, and the reason why, the reforms as I outline here must be the top priority of the next administration.

POLICY HUBS AND A 'PROGRAMME' FOR GOVERNMENT



The way policy currently emerges from government is thoroughly inadequate. It emerges on an ad hoc basis from individual departments. Never mind being a surprise to the general public - these emerging policies can sometime be a surprise to members of the Council of Ministers. This cannot go on. The three policy hubs each need a senior minister who in turn will then work with the junior ministers in his or her policy hub. The interaction between the Council of Ministers, the Policy Hubs and the Parliamentary Review Committees (which were formed during the last administration) would ensure that a clear **programme** for an administration could emerge having enjoyed the engagement of all the Members Tynwald. This **programme** would be formed at the beginning of a five year administration and then regularly updated in the light of experience and events.

REINFORCING THE ROLES OF OUR PARLIAMENTARY REVIEW COMMITTEES

Not only do we currently have too many autonomous departments but we also have too many MHKs serving as members of these departments. Since first elected I have always been really uncomfortable with this imbalance and, as a consequence, consistently refused to serve as a member of a department throughout my time as an MHK when

not acting in a ministerial role. Nor as a Minister did I use powers of political delegation in my departments. I think here it would be very worthwhile actually quoting from Lord Lisvane's recent report on this matter as it is particularly significant.

'I do not believe the system of Departmental Members is remotely sustainable. The issue of patronage, and the perception of reality that members are receiving significant salary enhancements for a role that at worst may be unnecessary, is a reputational liability'. I agree.

What we need to do is find a new balance so that government roles continue to be well served, through a system of senior and junior ministers as I have said, but that greater emphasis and importance is given to the review, or scrutiny, roles. MHKs who play a lead, usually chairing, role in one of the four scrutiny review committees should not be at a financial disadvantage for doing so when compared to those serving in government roles. As mentioned MLCs should play a more significant role in the scrutiny committees. I believe that such a rebalancing between executive and scrutiny roles would go a long way to reassure the public of the open and transparent nature of the political process. When this is combined with a determination to produce a **'Programme'** for government at the beginning of an administration it would do a great deal to negate the feeling amongst some that party politics is the only way forward. The fact that party politics does not suit our small parliament is no excuse for not establishing a sound and workable alternative which, over time, can come to be trusted.

REVISITING THE DUTIES OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

This is another subject about which there has been endless and fruitless discussion over the years. The concerns surrounding the democratic legitimacy of this arm of Tynwald stem from the fact that they fulfil many of the roles of elected MHKs but without actually being elected by the public. This can be overcome by ensuring that MLCs no longer serve as departmental members. Here I am again in accord with Lord Lisvane's report on our parliamentary structure and process. Removing MLCs in this way from executive government opens up a new and important opportunity for them to serve on enhanced and reinforced review committees with a duty to provide 'real time' scrutiny of the developing government policy **'Programme'**.

THE FUTURE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES



Yet again discussions on reform of local authorities have also gone on far too long but the emergence of a reformed central government and parliamentary process and accelerated digital inclusion would signal a new and enhanced role for local authorities. I believe four regional bodies should be formed replacing the many existing smaller local bodies. Local representation really matters but should be fully drawn into the regional bodies where that representation can make a real difference for their local communities. For example, I have long believed that the twenty or so existing housing bodies should

be realigned with these four regional bodies. Other opportunities will arise such as the formation of regional one stop shops for government services which would be particularly helpful to those who are uncomfortable with digital services. Crucial centrally funded services such as health, social care and education would then be in a better position to focus their work on a regional basis which would assist in better co-ordination between local and central government through the Cabinet Office.

Don't take my word for it. I am aware of a growing sense of frustration that exists amongst many of those working in government and public services who believe strong political leadership is needed. For example let me quote here from the Chief Constable's latest annual report when he says:

'The delivery of services at local level needs to be considered by politicians. Traditional models need to be revised and I would advocate new structures, that involve multi agency teams being located at different locations across the island with a remit to address vulnerability, tackle offending and identify problems then intervening at the earliest possible stage. Terrific benefits would likely rapidly accrue..... only the sort of bold approach I am advocating will properly position the Island's public services so that they can meet the increasingly complex challenges that they are facing.'

THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



In my 2011 manifesto I attached great importance to, and no small amount of words on, what I called a Strategic Inward Investment Fund. In effect it had three main parts to it (start ups, support for growth and infrastructure) and I am pleased to have been able to instigate action that ultimately delivered on the first two of these in the form of the £50m enterprise Scheme.

The third part of that proposal - the need for further infrastructure investment - is also extremely important and still needs to be met. This should be revisited by the next administration as a matter of some urgency as I am confident that there are real opportunities to be had where government initiatives, some public funds and private investment can be brought together to create real opportunities for further economic growth and the provision of improved facilities required by the community. By way of example areas worthy of examination include our sea service, ports, the built environment, housing and the provision of nursing homes.

Turning to the effects of the recent E.U. membership referendum in the UK on our economy. The impact will only become clear as the results of the negotiations are known but it is essential that our interests are as well represented as possible throughout and it was for that reason during our recent House of Keys 'Brexit' debate that I proposed that the next administration will need a Minister For External Affairs sitting within the Cabinet office. I stand by that now.

Government support for continued economic growth is sometimes seen within the constraints and limits of direct industry support initiatives but in truth it runs far deeper than that. A really crucial factor must be that of ensuring the continued confidence of the business community in the islands future – not only in its ability to maintain an attractive taxation regime in an increasingly competitive world but also to show that even with this it is still able to deliver high quality health, social care and education services to its people. That is the degree of the challenge before us and in overcoming it we would be firmly reinforcing the island's unique selling point as no other jurisdiction has yet managed to achieve such a crucially important balance.

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ISLAND'S CAPITAL



During my time in politics I have been steadfast in my view that to be really attractive to inward investment the islands capital must be its shop window. It has therefore been very disappointing to see what was an agreed promenade scheme, which almost came to fruition some considerable time ago, delayed again due to a change of Minister at the Department of Infrastructure. The work must now go ahead.

It was a further disappointment, having both initiated and put a considerable amount of work into the formation of the Douglas Master Plan to see the intended outcome of that work, namely renewing interest in major investment in the Lord Street site, stall during negotiations between the developers and the Department of Infrastructure. This continuing failure to deliver on such a crucially important site is becoming a real embarrassment and highlights the inadequacy of leaving such a key responsibility for the delivery of strategic developments in the hands a single department of government.

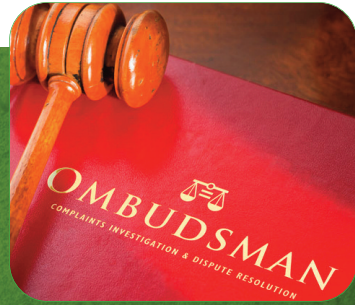
In terms of our major port facility in Douglas - I do not believe we have yet decided if it is, in strategic terms, fit for long term future purpose due the size limitation for vessel access. Despite this the Department of Infrastructure has encouraged quite unnecessarily premature negotiations with the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company which if they came to fruition would deliver an agreement into the 2040s. This is not the right way to go

about securing the future of our crucial lifeline. For clarity my concern is not the operating ferry company itself but rather the ownership structure, which sits behind it. This has been the cause of so many concerns.

Turning to the matter of the iconic building which is the Castle Mona and its prime location on the promenade. It used to be the home of our Lieutenant Governor and I do not see why it cannot be again. We should be willing to encourage major redevelopment on the existing site of the Lieutenant Governor's residence in order to realise its full potential value - the funds from which should then be used to purchase the Castle Mona. The upper floor should be set aside for His Excellency's new residence, with V.I.P. guest suites below whilst the ground floor areas should be renovated to a very high standard and put to a range of uses in keeping with the property's stature and importance. In that regard I would certainly also wish to see a section of the lawn re-instated to the front of the building to facilitate outdoor events when weather allows. I am quite sure this will not be the first time this idea has been suggested but we really need to start 'doing' rather than just 'saying'.

I should say that I am supportive of the continued provision of the Horse Trams albeit on a single track situated to the side of the road and with passing places. I have supported the Department of Infrastructure in their efforts and that of MNH to retain this service and commend those directly involved for increasing revenues and reducing costs since they took over.

SOME OUTSTANDING REFORMS



There is no dissent from the principles of introducing both an Auditor General and what is often called an Ombudsman. Both are strongly supported but the failure to introduce these roles during the last administration can be confidently attributed to a lack of funds, in turn a result of a slow pace of reform. Two more reasons why we need to really get on with the job in hand.

The now somewhat infamous Scope and Structure of Government Report which first appeared many years ago and was later reviewed and updated has still not been sufficiently acted upon. Parts of it still have real relevance and we really need to start driving these forward.

HOW WOULD THE VISION OF GOOD GOVERNMENT AS DESCRIBED IN THIS BOOK AFFECT YOU?



It might sometimes feel that you are working for government instead of it working for you. The reform agenda I have detailed here is designed to reverse this. Here are a dozen 'wins' that can be achieved with your support:

- 1. A much clearer understanding of what those you elected intended to do during their period of office.*
- 2. Significantly improved parliamentary scrutiny of the developing government 'Programme'.*
- 3. Recognition that a more focused and streamlined government would give greater confidence to the private sector which in turn would lead to increased investment and more job opportunities.*
- 4. An improved Capital.*
- 5. Under pinning economic growth through infrastructure investment leading to better employment opportunities.*

6. *Personal control by you over the data held about you by government.*
7. *Easier and quicker access to government services for you and your family.*
8. *The redirection of precious funds away from back office administration and bureaucracy to front line services that deliver to you and your family.*
9. *A progressive personalisation of service delivery to you.*
10. *A deeper understanding of 'need' and 'means' on the part of government helping to deliver better targeted policies and funds - particularly regarding vulnerability.*
11. *Greater cohesion in the delivery of a range of services in your community.*
12. *Improved accountability, transparency and access to redress.*

WHERE I STAND ON SOME OTHER ISSUES



- *I believe there is a need to consider the concept of intergenerational mortgages to help more young people onto the housing ladder.*
- *The Island may be satisfied with its broadband service but if we are really going to compete with the best we will need to focus on how we can further increase download speeds.*
- *There is a pressing need to create a fast track scheme to attract some of our brightest into public service careers.*
- *I stand by my comments on the environment as stated in my previous manifesto.*
- *I will continue to push for further increases in the support for early years learning nursery provision.*

- *Later retirement means we must start thinking about the concept of supporting phased retirement options. Sudden cliff edge retirement needs to be replaced with progressive personalised packages.*
- *Some progress has been made on the points I made in my 2011 manifesto concerning our justice system but there is more to do.*
- *I support the principle of moving towards the adoption of a living wage.*
- *Increased engagement of the considerable talent that exists on the Island needs to be harnessed by Government at an early stage as it is forming policy.*

CONCLUSION

I appreciate that a manifesto emphasising a number of lead policies might have been more welcome than a 'little book' about reforming our Government, Parliament and Local Government but if in the future we are all to enjoy the things that you might have wished me to raise here we must first put our own house in good order.

We have a outdated, top heavy, expensive and bureaucratic system which often inhibits the efforts of those who work in the public sector from delivering really high quality services to you and your family.

Having read this manifesto you may feel that the task is simply too great but should you do so I would not agree. We have a very real and distinct advantage in being such a small jurisdiction with almost complete control over our own destiny and in the next five years we must use this to our full advantage.

If you support enough of my thinking to consider it worthy of one of your two votes on the 22nd September you would be taking the very first step in a journey that would last the full term of the next administration but I assure you that the goal of creating a government that truly worked for you would be a prize worth having.

Success in this endeavour would open the door to so much more for the Island's future.





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