

THE RAMSGATE SOCIETY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2026

May 21st at the SAN CLU HOTEL, RAMSGATE, at 7.30pm

AGENDA and Relevant Papers

- 1. Welcome by Chairman, John Walker, and Introductions**
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
- 3. Minutes of the AGM, 9 July 2025 (attached)**
- 4. Matters Arising**
- 5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT for 2025-26 (attached)**
- 6. TREASURER'S REPORT & ACCOUNTS for 2025 (attached)**
- 7. Election of the Executive Committee for 2026-2027 (attached)**
- 8. Election of the Society's Officers for 2026-27 (attached)**
- 9. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & DISCUSSION**
- 10. Any Other Business**

Paul Shearer, Hon. Secretary

Enclosure: Item 3

THE RAMSGATE SOCIETY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

JULY 9th at the SAN CLU HOTEL, RAMSGATE, at 7pm

MINUTES

1. Welcome by Chairman, John Walker, and Introductions.

John Walker welcomed everybody to the AGM and introduced the Trustees and members of the Executive Committee present. There were 24 Members, including the Trustees and a Vice President, present.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Davena Green (Vice-President); Phil Shotton, Paul Shearer, Terry Prue and Susanne Ford (Trustees); Catriona Blaker, Rod Thomas and Reza Eskandarypur (Members).

3. Minutes of the AGM, 25 July 2024

The Minutes of the previous AGM held on July 25th 2024 were *agreed unanimously* as a correct record of the proceedings, and signed as such by the Chairman.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Chairman's Report for 2024-25

John Walker spoke to his Chairman's Report for 2024-25, a copy of which had been sent to Members in advance, as had the attached report on the Society's Achievements in the First 60 Years. He informed the meeting that Clive Aslet, the Society's President, would be speaking on Monday September 15th this year on the subject of King Charles and Architecture.

A copy of his Report and its attachment is attached to these Minutes.

6. Treasurer's Report and Accounts for the year 2024

David Lister, Hon. Treasurer, gave his report on the Society's financial position and presented the Accounts for the calendar year 2024, as required by the Charity Commission. A copy of the Accounts had been circulated in advance of the AGM, and are attached to these Minutes. He reported that the Accounts had been independently audited by a qualified accountant.

David was thanked for his work in improving the financial position of the Society and in simplifying their presentation. The Accounts were *unanimously agreed* as a correct record of the year's financial activities.

7. Election of the Executive Committee for 2025-26

Michael Ashley, Hon Secretary, introduced his report on the Election of the Executive Committee for the ensuing year, 2025-26. He reported that nomination papers for both the Executive Committee and the four Officer positions had been sent out 28 days in advance of the AGM. The only nominations received were from current members of the Committee, all of whom sought re-election for 2025-26

It was further reported that two members of the Committee during 2024-25 had resigned: Richard Oades, previously Vice-Chairman for many years had resigned on 10 December 2024, and Jacqui Ansell had resigned on the same date. John Walker paid tribute to Richard's long period of service to the Society.

The AGM was invited to confirm retrospectively the appointment by the Committee of Sophie Clissold-Lesser on 4 September 2024 and this was *unanimously agreed*.

The following nominees were *unanimously re-elected* to the Committee: John Walker, Sophie Clissold-Lesser, David Lister, Michael Ashley, Terry Prue, Paul Shearer, Phil Shotton, Rob Warren, and Susanne Ford. The two Vice-Presidents of the Society, Davena Green and Brian Daubney, both full working members of the Committee, were also *unanimously re-appointed* by the AGM.

8. Election of the Society's Officers for 2025-26

The Hon. Secretary reported that the only four nominations for the four Officer posts received were for the current holders of the positions: John Walker for Chairman,

Sophie Clissold-Lesser for Vice-Chairman, David Lister for Hon. Treasurer, and Michael Ashley for Hon. Secretary. The AGM *unanimously agreed* on their re-election for the forthcoming year.

Changes to two of these positions since the last AGM meant that the AGM was asked, and *unanimously agreed* to, the retrospective confirmation of the Executive Committee's appointment of Michael Ashley as Hon. Secretary (on 12 September 2024) and Sophie Clissold-Lesser as Vice Chairman (on 10 December 2024).

9. Members' Questions, Comments & Discussion

The Chairman invited Members to raise any matters of interest or concern, and the following items were raised and discussed: the current state of play with the Plan for Neighbourhoods and how the Society could seek to influence the spending of the available monies, with one Member reminded the meeting that, unusually, 25% of any annual funding could be spent on revenue rather than capital items; the devolution proposals from the Government and the likely reorganisation of local government in Kent, which would mainly involve new unitary authorities, including one for East Kent, with another Member pointing to the continuing strength of a Kentish identity, which might lead to a continuing role for an all-Kent "super-authority", probably with an elected mayor; and finally, the meeting was informed that in 2026 the Westcliff would be celebrating 100 years since the opening of the Prince Edward Promenade and its linking up with the Westcliff Chine, and that this would be discussed at an upcoming meeting of the Heritage Harbour Group.

10. Any Other Business: there were no items.

The Chairman thanked members for their attendance and for their contribution to an interesting discussion.

Michael Ashley, Hon. Secretary

Enclosure: Item 5

Ramsgate Society Chairman's Report AGM 21st May 2026 (Final)

Following our 60th Anniversary celebration in 2024 the Society went on to have another very active and successful year in 2025 and I set out below a brief summary of some of our recent activities.

Ramsgate Heritage Harbour Group

In July 2024, Ramsgate Royal Harbour was awarded the status of a National Heritage Harbour by Historic England, only one of fourteen locations across the United Kingdom to receive this important designation. The Ramsgate Society was asked to incorporate the newly formed Ramsgate Heritage Harbour Group (HHG) as a sub committee of the Society.

The Group consists of representatives from a large cross section of organisations in Ramsgate including Ramsgate Town Council (RTC), Thanet District Council (TDC), the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships (ADLS), Ramsgate Tunnels, The Ramsgate Festival and others who share our concern to protect and enhance the Royal Harbour. The group meets monthly to instigate, coordinate and help deliver range of projects and activities. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Denise Blunn (Chair of Ramsgate Working History) who acts as the Ramsgate representative on the National Heritage Harbour Group and does a superb job as the Ramsgate HHG Project Lead.

Heritage Harbours is a national joint initiative between Historic England, the Maritime Heritage Trust, National Historic Ships and local community groups. Its aims include: protecting heritage assets at risk; attracting investment and heritage funding, supporting local business growth, increasing tourism, and improving community cohesion and inclusion. These Objectives sit very well alongside those of the Ramsgate Society and we look forward to working with the HHG to deliver some much needed improvements to the Royal Harbour, which is a huge asset to the town.

Pride in Place Fund

In Spring 2024, Thanet District Council was successful in securing up to £20m endowment style funding for investment in local priorities over a 10-year period within the Ramsgate area. Originally launched as the "Long-Term Plan for Towns", then renamed "The Plan for Neighbourhoods" and now "Pride in Place" the fund seeks to empower local communities to identify and deliver projects that will tackle local challenges and inequalities.

The Pride in Place programme brings together community representatives, businesses, and strategic partners to prioritise funding into areas of local need to build a brighter future for all. Led by a 'Neighbourhood Board' and supported by Thanet District Council, the Board will develop a 10-Year Regeneration Plan for Ramsgate to address deprivation and regeneration in the area.

The Ramsgate Society has been invited by TDC to sit on the new Board to represent the heritage sector in Ramsgate in deciding how the money should be allocated. The Board are currently preparing an Investment Framework which will provide guidance to local organisations as to the type of projects that will comply with the Government's requirements and there will be a call for projects later this year.

The Clock House and Pier Yard

Members will be aware that the Society launched this project in 2016 with a feasibility study funded by a grant of £25,000 from the Coastal Community Fund and very significant offer of support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. We were disappointed that TDC declined to proceed at the time. It later emerged that they preferred to negotiate a surrender of the existing lease to the Steam Museum Trust, obtain vacant possession, and to offer the property on the open market.

Things suddenly changed when in 2021 TDC were awarded £20million for Ramsgate as part of the Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF) and the Clock House and Pier Yard were included in the project, based on our original

proposals which included a rear extension to increase the size of the museum. In 2025 TDC granted planning permission for a much reduced scheme based on the footprint of the existing building without the extension and work commenced in 2025 for completion in Autumn 2026.

The museum collection which is now owned by TDC has been carefully catalogued by Rob Warren (a professional museum curator and Trustee of the Ramsgate Society) and a team of Ramsgate Society Volunteers, and is now in storage with TDC awaiting completion of the building.

TDC are still considering their options for the fitting out and future management of the museum. There is a lot of work to be done which still needs to be funded before the museum can be opened and this may take some time. Hopefully we will be able to report more positively before our next AGM in 2027.

The Port of Ramsgate

Together with the Ramsgate Regeneration Alliance we have previously expressed our concerns about the ongoing losses, now exceeding £30million, and the TDC proposals to invest further public funds to further intensify the industrialisation of the Port without a credible business plan.

After the failure to find an operator for the Port TDC are now considering what other options are available to them for the long term future of the Port and we await hearing what those options might be. We assume TDC will engage with local community groups as to what local residents would like to see done with the Port and will ensure that any options are economically viable and sustainable in the longer term.

The Society would like to see a much more evidence based approach to decision making on this issue and are interested in working collaboratively with TDC and The Ramsgate Regeneration Alliance (RRA) to help secure some economically viable and sustainable outcomes.

Local Government Reorganisation.

In 2025 the Government announced its intention to reorganise local government by abolishing the existing District Councils and creating new larger Unitary Authorities. In the case of East Kent this would mean the abolition of Canterbury, Thanet, Dover and Folkestone District Councils and the creation of a new single East Kent Unitary Authority.

The Government asked both District Councils and County Councils to submit initial proposals for how they think this should be implemented in their own areas by the end of March 2025 and final proposals were submitted at the end of November 2025. The Government will then respond in Spring /early Summer 2026 and legislation will follow. Shadow Unitary Authorities will be created in 2027 and the new arrangements will become fully operational in 2028.

This is the most significant reorganisation in Local Government for 50 years and yet very few members of the general public seem to be aware of it. The Society recently hosted a talk by David Wilson, Chair of The Canterbury Society and an expert in Local Government matters and how it might affect us here in Ramsgate.

Events and Community Engagement.

Sea front Shelters. We continued throughout the year working in partnership with Ramsgate Town Council to maintain and clean the 13 sea front shelters that the Society renovated in 2012 at a cost of some £500,000. Would like to thank Maxine Morgan at RTC and our own Davena Green (Vice President) who work tirelessly to keep on top of this ongoing project. It's a bit like painting the Forth Bridge!

Heritage Open Days. (HODS) For several years now the Society has coordinated Heritage Open Days in Thanet. This year once again we are working collaboratively with Thanet District Council, The Margate Civic Society and Broadstairs Town Council to coordinate the event across the whole of Thanet. The event this year will take place from 11th to 19th September 2026 and a new leaflet for this will be printed and distributed widely across Thanet in August. Susanne Ford who previously lead for Ramsgate on this project stepped down in 2025

and her place has been taken by Ramsgate Society member Elizabeth Seaward who has had an immediate impact on the local organisation of what is now the largest national heritage event in the country.

Litter Picks. Litter continues to be a problem, not just in Ramsgate but also in Thanet generally and the country as a whole. As an active member of the Ramsgate Litter Forum we work with Ramsgate Town Council and other local community groups to try and keep the litter off our streets. The Ramsgate Litter Forum organise a number of litter picks throughout the year and details of these are usually posted on our website for members who wish to take part.

Ramsgate Society Talks Series. Our series of regular talks organised by committee member Terry Prue continues to be very popular, with most events fully booked in advance. We have had some excellent talks recently but one that really stood out was the talk by the President of The Ramsgate Society Clive Aslet in September 2025 entitled "If walls could talk...Ramsgate's Architectural Secrets" which was so oversubscribed we had to book a larger venue! This talk formed part of the Society's contribution to Heritage Open Days 2025.

Details of our monthly talks are posted in our monthly newsletters and on our website <www.ramsgatesociety.org.uk> Early registration via Eventbrite is recommended.

Dunkirk Little Ships Event May 2025. In May 2025 the Dunkirk Little Ships revisited Ramsgate to celebrate the 85th Anniversary of Operation Dynamo in 1940, which changed the course of World War 2. The event was a great success with thousands of people attending the various activities.

The Society was involved in helping to organise the event via the Heritage Harbour Group which acted as an umbrella organisation for the participants and special thanks are due to the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships and their Commodore Kevin Finn, The Royal Temple Yacht Club, Ramsgate Town Council, Ramsgate Tunnels and many other local community groups who all came together to make this happen.

Our own particular contributions were to arrange for the restoration of the Dunkirk War Memorial in Pier Yard which was originally unveiled by Dame Vera Lynn in 2000 and again by Prince Michael of Kent when he visited Ramsgate on 20th May last year as part of the Dunkirk Little Ships Event. We contributed towards the cost of the Standing with Giants silhouette in Pier Yard and helped fund the Dunkirk Little Ships Film Festival which took place over three evenings at the Granville Theatre.

The Dunkirk Little Ships are set to return to Ramsgate on 22nd May 2026 and we are looking forward to welcoming them again for what we hope will become a regular event.

Ramsgate Society Community Champion Awards

For many years, the Ramsgate Society Community Champions Award has been given to local people who, in the opinion of the Society's Executive Committee, have made an exceptional contribution to the quality of life in the town.

This is usually a bi-annual event and the last awards were in 2024 when we worked in a joint partnership with Ramsgate Town Council and the presentation ceremony took place in December 2024 in the Council Chamber at The Custom House.

We would normally be holding another event this year but this would have clashed with the Thanet Community Champion Awards in 2026 so we will probably be looking to pick this up again in 2027.

Membership and Communications Our monthly electronic newsletter continues to be the most effective way of communicating with our members and keeps members updated on our activities on a regular basis. Over the last year our Membership and Communications working group have worked hard to update our membership records and as a result we have seen our membership and subscription base starting to grow.

Following our 60th Anniversary in 2024 we are now looking forward to relaunching the Society for the next 60 years and our Comms Team are currently working with some ideas of how we might do this- so watch this space.

Finance. Our finances continue to be in good shape and our most recent accounts will be presented for approval by members at this AGM. I would like to offer our special thanks to David Lister our Treasurer for the excellent work he does in keeping our accounts and finances under close and efficient control.

Finally. I would like to thank the members of the Ramsgate Society Executive Committee for all their hard work during the last twelve months. We are a very dedicated team who are all passionate about Ramsgate and it's a pleasure for me to act as their Chairman. I would particularly like to mention Susanne Ford, Phil Shotton and Brian Daubney who stood down this year after many years as valuable and active committee members.

John Walker

Chairman

Item 6.

Accounts to year end 2025 Ramsgate Society for submission to Charity Commission.

Sent as a separate item

ENCLOSURE: ITEMS 7 and 8

ELECTION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE and ELECTION OF OFFICERS for 2026-27

Executive Committee

1. Nomination Papers for both the Executive Committee and the four Officer posts were sent out to all Members 28 days in advance of the AGM, with a deadline for return by May 7th. The only nominations received (proposed and seconded in writing by members of the Society) were those of the existing members of the Committee and the four Office holders. The AGM is therefore invited to *confirm or otherwise* the re-election of all the nominees, and to *retrospectively confirm* the provisional appointment of both new members of the Committee and those members who have been provisionally appointed to new posts since last year's AGM by the Executive Committee.

2. Two members of the Committee have resigned since the previous AGM: Brian Daubney, previously the Vice-Chairman for many years, and latterly Joint Vice-Chairman, resigned on 10 December 2024. Brian Daubney stepped away from his role as Vice President on 8th April 2026: Phil Shotton, Environment and Climate Change, resigned on March 24th. Susanne Ford and Mike Ashley, stepped down from the committee on December 2025. Mike Ashley was elected Vice President at the January 2026 committee meeting. Paul Shearer assumed the role of Hon. Secretary on 10 December 2025.

4. The following are seeking re-election to the Executive Committee and the AGM is invited to confirm the election of each nominee:

John Walker, Sophie Clissold-Lesser, David Lister, Terry Prue, Paul Shearer, and Rob Warren.

5. Our Constitution includes the provision for the appointment of honorary members of the Executive Committee, specifically Vice Presidents. Davena Green and Mike Ashley currently hold these

positions, and are working members of the Committee. The AGM is invited to continue with the appointment of these two Vice Presidents.

Officers of the Committee.

6. The four Officer Posts are Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary. They have to be members of the Executive Committee.

7. John Walker, the Chairman, Sophie Clissold Lister, Vice Chair, and David Lister, the Hon. Treasurer, have held their posts throughout the last year, and are seeking re-election. The AGM is invited to approve their re-election for the forthcoming year.

8. Paul Shearer was appointed by the committee to Hon. Secretary on 10 December 2025. The AGM is invited to confirm retrospectively his appointment by the Committee, and his re-election to this post for the forthcoming year.

9. Michael Ashley was appointed by the Committee to the post of Vice President on 6 January 2025. The AGM is invited to confirm retrospectively his appointment, and his re-election to the post for the forthcoming year.