

CLEVEDON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL FINANCE & GENERAL POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN THE COUNCIL OFFICES, 44 OLD STREET, ON MONDAY 12TH JANUARY
2012 AT 7.30 PM.

Present: Councillor C Francis-Pester Committee Chairman
Councillor, C. Blades, J Geldart, C. Hall, G Hill, L. Little, J Middleton, J.
Norton-Sealey, D. Shopland, A. Walker & C. Wring.
Town Clerk – Ms P. Heath,
In Attendance – Cllr L Knott, N. Pennycott, and A. Withers

INFORMAL

The Chairman explained why the meeting had been called in response to issues raised at the Council meeting on 4th January in respect of Council procedures concerning contracts. And to ensure that decisions are made on the Flower bed contract before the finalisation of the Precept.

Cllr Hall asked the Chairman if he could say a few words before the start of the formal meeting; this permission was given. During his speech he commented on his role as Chairman of North Somerset Council and the support he had pledged as that Chairman to The Community Association and the Pier Trust; he was unhappy at the recent grant decisions, and raised details concerning the possible land purchase. He went on to call into question the administration and professionalism of the office under the management of the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk was given no option to respond or refute the comments. The Chairman was reminded by the Town Clerk that under the Council's standing orders and employment law any issues relating to staff must be heard in a closed meeting. The Councils Grievance and Discipline Policy require that any complaints are via the Chairman of Finance & General Policy

In response to Cllr Halls comments on the land purchase Cllr Shopland reaffirmed that this was a confidential item as agreed by Council and the Councils interest should not have been put in the public domain. The public awareness of the Councils proposal could be detrimental to the Councils interest.

The Chairman stated that the personnel issues would be dealt with outside of this meeting.

FGP 12/195 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors, B. Garner (other commitments) and T. Morgan (other commitments)

FGP 12/196 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations of interest on items on the agenda

FGP 12/197 DISCUSS COUNCIL PROCEDURE IN RESPECT OF AGREEING AND AWARDING CONTRACTS

Members discussed at length the current process and procedures for appointing and awarding contracts on behalf of the Town Council. It was explained that many companies were unwilling to tender for Local Government work, recently there have been occasions when no company was prepared to tender, due to the lengthy procedural nature of appointing and awarding a contract. The specification is drawn up either by staff members or specialists depending on the nature of the project and agreed before being sent. Members discussed the possibility of compiling a preferred contractors list. It was agreed this would be discussed at the next FGP meeting in March, including the process for compiling the list, agreeing the type of contractors to be requested, the checking of companies that apply, the grading of contractors and the yearly reviews. In response to a comment it was explained that the Council does seek and obtain specialist knowledge to draw up the specification and review the tenders as and when required. It was further explained that the laws governing the Local Government sector are specific in relation to financial aspects many of which do not apply to the private sector.

It was noted that any member can attend a committee subcommittee or working group meeting and that the standing orders allow for them to identify their expert knowledge in a field and contribute to the discussions and decisions even if they are not part of the committee subcommittee or working group. The standing orders also allow for the co-option on to a committee any specialist help required for a specific project.

FGP 12/198 DISCUSS THE RULES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION OF LAND BY THE TOWN COUNCIL

Following on from Cllr Hall's comments in the informal session in which he explained that he had been to see the NSC officer and discussed with him the details of the land being considered, members discussed the procedure that had been identified in the Committees Terms of Reference and minutes of the Council. It was noted that any land purchased would be as amenity land due to legal requirements. Members noted the Environment & Property Committee Meeting on Monday 16th January when the investigation work into the land would be discussed and agreed; again members were reminded that all Councillors could attend.

The Members discussed the process of Committee discussion and Council agreement. The Committee are all governed by Terms of Reference and hold discussions within their criteria. The agenda and background papers are sent to all members to enable those who wish to be involved in the discussion to do so. Members agreed that the committee process should be respected and to keep discussions at Council to relative points, new pieces of information or to enable those not at the meeting to comment.

FGP 12/199 DISCUSS AND AGREE THE DETAILS OF THE FLOWER BED CONTRACT AND PREFERRED CONTRACTOR

Members noted that the specification had been circulated by email on 8th November to all FGP members, none of whom had raised any comments. It was sent out as per agreement and the working party evaluated the results as designated by the Committee. The notes of the Working Group had been circulated with the agenda; these would have been submitted to the FGP committee on 18th. Discussion on the plants would be held pending the approval of the budget on 25th January when a formal contract would be signed.

Proposed by Cllr Shopland, seconded by Cllr Hill and Recommend by 9 votes to 0 to the FGP Committee on 18th January the preferred contractor as announced at the Council Meeting.

The meeting finished at 8.55 pm

APPROVED AS A TRUE RECORD

CHAIRMAN Date