

CLEVEDON TOWN COUNCIL

Public Session

Public Participation

A member of the public enquired as to the percentage increase on the Precept for 2024/25. Under minute no. 1675 it states 4.00%, yet on the Council Tax bill the resident has received it shows 4.50% for Clevedon. Please can this be clarified.

The same member of the public also enquired as to an article in the Bristol Post concerning £50,000.00 that was allocated to the Clevedon slipway by NSC is now to be used to support the changes to Public Realm scheme. The Town Council has approved a grant of £20,000.00, so what is the Council position now that this has been announced.

The Chairman of Council responded that this is a media report at present.

7.35pm - The Chairman moved the meeting into formal session

Minutes

Minutes of a Meeting (commenced at 7.30pm) of **Clevedon Town Council** held at the **Council Offices 44 Old Street Clevedon** on Wednesday **20th March 2024** when the following business was transacted.

PRESENT Chairman of the Council – Cllr C Blades together with Councillors - N Barton, B Culblaithe, C Francis-Pester, A Gardner, A Goodliffe, C Lord, K O’Brien, D Shopland, R Westwood & H Young.
Members of the Public – 6

1705 To receive and approve apologies for absence

Apologies were received and **APPROVED** from Cllr T Morgan (Out of Clevedon) & Cllr A Everitt (family)
Apologies also received from Mr B Chislett – Town Council Tree Officer

1706 To receive declarations of interest for items on the agenda

There were no declarations of interest for items on the agenda.

1707 To receive and ratify the minutes of the Council meeting dated 28th February 2024

Proposed, Seconded and **APPROVED** the 28th February 2024 minutes which were signed as a true copy by the Chairman.

1708 To receive and sign the restated 2022/23 Town Council accounts

The Chairman of Council advised that he is seeking permission to sign the 2022/23 accounts off. Cllr Francis-Pester stated that he accepts the intent, however, he is not happy with the restated accounts for a number of reasons and he is not able to tell what the exact situation is with the accounts. The accounts are difficult to reconcile, even though everything is paid up to date and the Councillors have not seen any reports.

Cllr Francis-Pester proposed that the decision be deferred to a meeting of Finance & General Policy to discuss further.

Minutes to be ratified at Full Council on 24th April 2024

The Council must adhere to insurance policy endorsement regulation number – FG02 – Specific Person Exception, policy wide, Section 5, Fidelity Guarantee, Exclusions & Section 8, Officials Indemnity, Exclusions: A & B.

The Chairman of Council stated that this is as good as the Town Council is going to get with the figures and some discrepancies are auditable, there is nothing worrying or fraudulent happening.

Cllr Young enquired as to what are the risks for not submitting the restated 2022/23 accounts to the External Auditor now. The Council Clerk confirmed that the former Locum RFO had stressed to Committee members that the longer the accounts are not signed off and are not with the External Auditor then the Council is incurring a daily fine for not having submitted the accounts.

Cllr Lord confirmed that the accounts should not be signed as they are a 'dog's dinner' due to mistakes made.

Cllr Francis-Pester enquired whether the Town Council is covered by the former Locum RFO's insurance due to the Council being fined by the External Auditor. If the accounts are signed off, what will the Council be liable for.

Cllr Westwood advised that he is confident to sign off the accounts, following discussions he has had with the Locum RFO and the correspondence and reports produced by Rialtas. What has been said is a misapplication of money to the correct destinations within the accounting systems, no money has gone astray.

Cllr Gardner stressed that the Council needs to move on and not waste tax payer's money on fines being issued by the External Auditor.

Cllr Francis-Pester wants to believe that the Council can move forward but the bank account has not been reconciled at the end of the year and therefore cannot be confident that the accounts are where they should be.

Cllr Lord confirmed that there needs to be a proper investigation to get to the bottom of matters, without sweeping matters under the carpet.

Cllr Young moved an amendment to Cllr Francis-Pester's proposal, in that a deadline of one week, be set to resolve any questions from Council members around the accounts and then bring the matter back to Council to discuss and finalise matters.

Matters become personal in the discussion held between Council members, concerning the management of the former Locum RFO and how were mistakes handled.

The proposal by Cllr Young was voted on by Council members, with 4 votes in favour of the amendment and 6 against.

Cllr Shopland declared that the original proposal by Cllr Francis-Pester still stands. There should have been supervision with the former Locum RFO. The Council needs to establish where it went wrong and what can be done to prevent it happening again.

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The Council Clerk stated that Councillors were given to the opportunity to come into the Council offices to speak with the Locum RFO about the accounts and only one Councillor did so, but did not view any accounts material.

RESOLVED: that the decision to defer the matter to a meeting of the Finance & General Policy Committee with 6 votes in support and 4 against the proposal.

1709 To agree to extend the Locum RFO's contract until the 30th June 2024

Cllr Shopland suggested that the Council considers extending the Locum RFO's contract until the end of the year, i.e. 31st December 2024.

RESOLVED: that the Council extends the Locum RFO's contract to the 30th June 2024, or the 31st December 2024, if acceptable to the Locum RFO.

1710 To receive requests from Councillors not present at the Council meeting held on the 28th February 2024 concerning Committee membership

Cllr Westwood was not present at the 28th February 2024 meeting and stated he would like to join the Planning Committee as not all Wards are being represented by current membership.

RESOLVED: that Cllr Westwood becomes a Committee member.

Cllr Gardner was also not at the 28th February 2024 Council meeting and commented that she was surprised that the majority of the Council has agreed to return to all Standing Committees.

Cllr Gardner confirmed that she was happy to remain as Chair of the Allotments Committee.

Cllr Gardner also shocked that she was removed from the Staffing Committee with no prior notification. She would like to re-join this Committee.

Cllr Lord advised that it is stated that there should only be four members on the Staffing Committee.

Cllr Young also expressed that it was not wise to have an even number of Councillors on a Committee when it comes to a vote.

The Council Clerk to seek clarification on the membership quota.

ACTION – Council Clerk

Cllr Gardner also enquired with the Council Clerk whether she considered the Councillor to be her personal friend. The Council Clerk found this difficult to answer but confirmed that she did not.

Cllr Gardner continued by expressing concern that a member of the Staffing Committee is known to be a family friend of a member of staff, which should not be permitted when it comes to discussing Staffing matters.

Cllr Young also provided Cllr Lord with the opportunity of a handover to the Staffing Committee or Chairman of Staffing in order to maintain the level of continuity concerning staffing matters and the Town Clerk recruitment.

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1711 Allotments**(1) To discuss and decide on the Allotment Committee membership**

As stated under minute no. 1710, Cllr Gardner is happy to remain as Chair of the Allotments Committee. No further requests were received to join this Committee.

1712 Planning**(1) To discuss and agree recommendations for the Planning applications received from NSC for each Ward**

EAST WARD - The following Planning applications were **APPROVED** by the East Ward Councillors 24/P/0291/FUH & 24/P/0374/TPO

SOUTH WARD – The following planning application was **APPROVED** by the South Ward Councillors. 24/P/0323/FUH

WALTON WARD – The following planning applications were **APPROVED** by the Walton Ward Councillors.

24/P/0155/FUH, 24/P/0395/TRCA, 24/P/0411/FUH, 24/P/0406/TPO, 24/P/0461/TRCA & 24/P/0466/TRCA.

WEST WARD – The following planning application was **APPROVED** by the West Ward Councillors. 24/P/0436/NMA & 24/P/0458/LBC.

1713 Town, Events & Amenities**(1) To discuss and agree the frequency and dates of the Town, Events and Amenities Committee meetings for 2024, how they will be clerked and any outstanding items for consideration on the next Committee agenda**

The Chairman of Council stated that instead of taking each Committee individually, he would discuss a date for the next Council meeting first, then discuss all Standing Committees together.

The date of the next Full Council meeting was **AGREED** as the 24th April 2024.

The Chairman of Council suggested that all Standing Committee's hold their meetings on a bi-monthly basis. It was agreed for the Chairs of all Standing Committee's to liaise with the Council Clerk to confirm Committee meeting dates for 2024. The Allotments and Planning Committees have already set their dates for the forthcoming year. **ACTION – Committee Chairs**

Cllr Young stated that the Council Clerks cannot be expected to support all Standing Committee's due to the office being understaffed. Cllr Shopland stated that with four Clerks in the office then clerking meetings should not be a problem, or this will need to become a Staffing matter.

The Council Clerk stated that currently there are only three Clerks in the office, one of which is out on long term sick leave. Another member of staff is willing to support the Allotments Committee and one other Committee on a Wednesday if given enough notice. The Council Clerk is only willing to support two evening meetings a month.

Cllr Lord, Chair of Staffing Committee asked the Council Clerk for the job descriptions of all staff.

ACTION – Council Clerk

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(2) To receive and agree to a quote for tree works to remove overhanging branches and associated vegetation around the boundary walls of Herbert Gardens onto Herbert Road

RESOLVED: that the Council **AGREED** to the tree works proposed in Herbert Gardens at a cost of £890.00 + VAT.

1714 Finance & General Policy

(1) To discuss and agree the frequency and dates of the Finance and General Policy Committee meetings for 2024, how they will be clerked and any outstanding items for consideration on the next Committee agenda

Please refer to minute no. 1713 (1)

(2) To discuss and agree the quote concerning the renewal of the Aruba licences to support the cloud controller in connection with the office internet

The Chairman of Council confirmed that this item needs further investigation and the item was deferred to the next meeting of Council.

1715 Property

(1) To discuss and agree the frequency and dates of the Property Committee meetings for 2024, how they will be clerked and any outstanding items for consideration on the next Committee agenda

Please refer to minute no. 1713 (1)

1716 Transport & Highways

(1) To discuss and agree the frequency and dates of the Transport & Highways Committee meetings for 2024, how they will be clerked and any outstanding items for consideration on the next Committee agenda

Please refer to minute no. 1713 (1)

1717 Council

(1) To discuss and agree the frequency and dates of the Full Council meetings and how they will be clerked

The next Full Council meeting to be held on the 24th April 2024. Committee members also **AGREED** to holding Council meetings every six weeks.

1718 Clerks Report

The Clerk had no matters to report.

1719 To receive information from Clevedon North Somerset Councillors relating directly to Clevedon Update on the Public Realm

Cllr Young confirmed that there will be an Executive Meeting of the Council on the 27th March 2024 to discuss the Public Realm alterations to the existing design. A total pot of money totalling £425,000.00 has been achieved to support the changes which are planned to be completed in November 2024. Cllr Young is speaking with business owners on The Beach to keep all informed.

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To respond to the query by the member of the public in the public participation, the reallocation of £50,000.00 from the slipway is by means of a borrowing commitment by NSC, as the Public Realm and Ladye Bay landslip matters are more urgent and immediate issues.

NSC Consultations

Cllr Young advised that two consultations have been released by NSC.

Parking Charges – drop-in sessions are being arranged in Clevedon Library. A meeting is to be held with traders and Clevedon BID. Cllr Young is actively encouraging residents to respond to the consultation.

Three weekly bin collections – Cllr Young is seeking residents to respond. Drop-in sessions to be arranged to support questions and feedback.

Seafront Concessions – Cllr Young advised that a tender is going out for the train, café and mini golf, with the possibility of a bouncy castle.

The Town Council needs to decide on what support it is giving to the Skatepark Project and Pump Track projects.

Clevedon School – NSC are looking as to what support it can provide to Clevedon School when part of the school is rebuilt due to the concrete issue with the main tower.

1720 To receive the Chairman’s Report

The Chairman had no matters to report.

The Chairman of Council closed the formal session of the meeting and explained to members of the public that the meeting was moving into confidential session due to Staffing matters.

9.06pm – All members of the public left the meeting.

Formal session of the meeting closed at 9.07pm

CHAIRMAN DATE

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