

**CLEVEDON TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes**

**Minutes** of the Extra Ordinary Meeting (commenced at 7.30pm) of **Clevedon Town Council** held at the **Council Offices 44 Old Street Clevedon** on Wednesday **29<sup>th</sup> April 2024** when the following business was transacted.

**PRESENT** - Chairman of the Council – Cllr T Morgan together with Councillors - N Barton, B Culblaithe, C Francis-Pester (7.40pm), A Gardner, A Goodliffe, C Lord, K O'Brien, D Shopland, R Westwood & H Young.

**IN ATTENDANCE** – Mrs S Howard, Acting Proper Officer, Mr B Harding – Chief Officer, ALCA & Mrs N Flint – Locum Responsible Financial Officer

**1736 To receive and approve apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and **APPROVED** from Cllr C Blades (family) & Cllr A Everitt (family).

**1737 To receive declarations of interest for items on the agenda**

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

**1738 To receive and sign the restated 2022/23 Town Council accounts**

The Chairman of Council advised members that the Chief Officer (CO) from Avon Local Councils Association (ALCA) had submitted a paper to all Councillors before the meeting. He expressed his thanks to the CO for all the help and support given to the Council.

The CO thanked Councillors he had spoken to about the 2022/23 accounts. The objective of the meeting is to sign off the 2022/23 accounts, if they are not, then the minutes must be recorded whichever way the meeting takes.

The CO summarised the main issue being raised with him by members was around liability. The CO gave assurances that there are no personal liabilities. The Council signs the Declaration as a Corporate Body.

Within the AGAR documentation that needs to be signed, are nine points that must be answered either Yes or No. At the point of signing the AGAR there were three stating Yes which have now been changed and reasons for the changes are stated.

The reason for the change is due to the significant issues with the accounts, which have been observed by the Internal Auditor and an action plan has been created.

Training for Councillors is required, in order that confidence in the accounts can be achieved and will help with questions in the future.

The CO stated that we are not in a position this year to scrutinise the accounts, but moving forward and establishing monthly reports will mitigate this in the future.

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Point 1 on the AGAR has been changed to No. Reason for this is there needs to be work with the Town Clerk and Locum RFO to obtain a process of getting the figures together.

Currently no time for this, and therefore best to be cautious on the report and state No on this occasion.

Point 6 – The process to maintain the internal audit has not been scrutinised on a regular basis, therefore it was decided to state No to this question.

Point 8 – There are staffing and HR issues that need to be resolved concerning the legal process. However, a Councillor confirmed that the Council is not liable for any costs under the insurance cover it holds and therefore Point 8 can remain as Yes on the form.

The CO advised that by saying No to most questions is not an admission of liability, we are saying that there have been issues which the Council will address in the future.

The CO reiterated to all members that all figures on the accounts are valid, all the money is there and the accounts have been restated and omissions identified by removing duplicate suppliers invoices from the system and the accounts are now in the process of being resolved and in a better state going forward.

There are many codes on the Rialtas system that need to be removed due to the number that are either no longer used or have been duplicated over a period of time. The Locum RFO has already begun work to support this issue.

A Councillor wished to have a recorded vote, and the CO confirmed that doing this carries the risk of accountability. By having a normal vote shows a collected decision by the Council. The Councillor disagreed with the CO's reasoning and stated that we need to learn from our mistakes and is not happy to vote on this matter.

Another Councillor stated that he needed to understand where things have gone wrong, and that this issue could happen again. By signing off the accounts gives the impression that things are okay.

The CO advised that the data entry was the largest problem, that went unchecked for a period of time. The current Locum RFO has a lot of work to support for the 2023/24 accounts and has started putting measures in place to help support this from happening again.

Following the debate by Committee members, it was proposed and seconded to have a recorded vote.

The vote was taken with 5 votes for and 5 votes against. The Chairman of Council used his casting vote and voted **AGAINST** a recorded vote.

Proposed, Seconded and **AGREED** by 7 for the signing of the AGAR, with 3 against and 1 abstained.

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Proposed, Seconded and **AGREED** by a majority to the Annual Governance statement being No for questions 1 and 6 and Yes to question 8.

The AGAR was duly signed by the Chairman of Council and the Locum RFO.

The meeting closed at 8.29pm.

CHAIRMAN ..... DATE .....

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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.