



Inglewood Shire Council

Special Meeting of Council

Minutes

Meeting held in the Council Chambers

Cnr Albert and Elizabeth Streets

Inglewood Queensland 4387

Wednesday 11 July, 2007

Wednesday, 11 July, 2007 – 8.20 a.m.

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INGLEWOOD SHIRE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL

11 July, 2007

Present: Councillor J White (Mayor)
Councillor RJ Pietsch (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor B Johnson
Councillor L Cox
Councillor L Dawson
Councillor M Moffitt
Councillor T Tait
Councillor D Thompson
Don Ramsland (Chief Executive Officer)

Apologies *Councillor R McDougall*

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1. OPENING OF MEETING

The Mayor welcomed all Councillors and declared the meeting open at 8.20 a.m.

Attendance: Councillor Johnson was not in attendance at the commencement of the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

All Councillors with the exception of Cr McDougall were in attendance.

Resolution: 2007-0693

Moved: Cr Tait Seconded: Cr Moffitt

That the apology of Cr McDougall be accepted and that leave of absence from the meeting be granted.

CARRIED: (VOTE: 7/0)

Attendance: Councillor Johnson attended the meeting at 8:29 am

3. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

3.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM – CONDUCTING OF POLL

Reason to Report

To discuss whether or not Inglewood Shire Council should consider conducting a poll of ratepayers as a means of ascertaining the community's view on the need for a referendum prior to the introduction of any Local Government Reforms including an amalgamation.

Background

The LGAQ is recommending to any Council that is concerned that the Local Government Reform Commission (LGRC) may make a recommendation that will force either amalgamation or boundary change on the Council, that the Council considers taking a poll of their electors on whether they reject such recommendations.

The LGAQ has been advised that there is no legal action that can be taken to prevent the State from implementing LGRC recommendations.

Hence, LGAQ believes that only the Members of State Parliament that will vote on the proposed legislation to implement the recommendations can be swayed to reject recommendations that adversely impact on Councils.

Members of Parliament may take notice of clear evidence of community opposition to the recommendations in the form of results from a properly conducted Poll – taken in accordance with the Local Government Act.

The State has said in its announcements about the Reform process that the LGRC will deliver its recommendations by 1 August and that the matter will be determined by Parliament in September.

State Cabinet is scheduled to meet during 6/7/8 August, 2007 and quite obviously the Local Government Reform issue will be high on the agenda being discussed at Cabinet Level.

Sitting days for Parliament have been set down for Tuesday 21, Wednesday 22 and Thursday 23 August, as well as Tuesday 4, Wednesday 5 and Thursday 6 September.

It is in a Council's interest to get the community's view of any recommendation in front of Parliamentary Members as early as possible, and certainly before the sitting of Parliament set down for 21 – 23 August.

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Therefore the proposal is that Councils (those that wish to) take action to conduct a poll on Saturday 18 August.

This will require almost immediate decisions and action if a Poll is to be properly conducted on 18 August.

If a Council decides to proceed with a Poll, it should be sure to take appropriate resolutions to amend the adopted budget or authorise the expenditure required to conduct the Poll, to avoid any possibility of liability for unauthorised expenditure.

It is possible that Councils could be concerned about possible LGRC recommendations, commence action to take a Poll, and then find the announced recommendations do not impact on their Council/Community.

In that event, the Poll action could be abandoned.

Poll Question

A draft generic LR reform question for a Poll, together with draft Statements for and against the question to be voted on in the Poll as well as a time line of actions that will need to be taken to allow the proper conduct of a Poll on Saturday 18 August, 2007 will be sent out under separate cover.

It is possible that Council could put other questions at the proposed Poll i.e. reduction in number of Councillors, election of Mayor and the like as well.

Costs

It is estimated that the costs of the poll would be similar to those involved in holding an election or by-election in the order of \$10 - \$15,000.

Alternatives

Council's action in considering a poll is being prompted by the State Government's action in conducting a \$1.5m media blitz supporting the stance it is taking in relation to the LGRC and possible forced amalgamations.

If Council does not continue to take a proactive approach to the Local Government Reform issue, and the State Government proceeds to implement forced amalgamations without a referendum, the local community will be denied a democratic opportunity to express its views in relation to the amalgamation issue.

To leave the question of holding a poll until after the release of the LGRC recommendations scheduled for Wednesday 1 August, 2007 would preclude the holding of a poll before the matter is placed before Parliament on 21-23 August, 2007.

Whilst Council could attempt to conduct a massive (free) media campaign, it is not known what support would be forthcoming from the media particularly if every other local Council had the same intention.

This approach would only be successful if a coordinated approach were taken by a regional group such as DDROC. Attempts to organise Southern Downs Councils have proved fruitless as the majority of Councils see change as inevitable and appear to be waiting until the eleventh hour before initiating opposition once the die in relation to their future has already been cast.

Council should also consider holding a series of public meetings across the Shire prior to any Poll being held. The thrust of such meetings should be centred on an explanation of Council's Corporate Plan/Budgets for the next five (5) year period coupled with the anticipated impact amalgamation would have.

There also needs to be a detailed explanation of alternatives to amalgamation available to our Community.

By Thursday of this week Council should be in a position to mail out a summary of its Local Government Reform Agenda Submission with the full submission being available on Council's website or hard copy issues obtainable from the Council Libraries at Inglewood and Texas.

Council's website will also have hotlinks to the State Government Reform paper, the Local Government Association of Queensland's (LGAQ) Submission to the LGRC as well as a copy of an independent review of both papers by Armidale (NSW) Academic Professor Brian Dollery.

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Recommendation:

That Council determine whether to conduct a Poll on the Local Reform Issue and/or what other steps should be taken in conjunction with any action deemed necessary.

Resolution: 2007-0694

Moved: Cr Johnson Seconded: Cr Tait

That Council:-

- Reaffirm its objection to any Local Government Reform Process that involves forced amalgamation or boundary changes for Inglewood Shire.
- Only support conducting a poll of elections on the forced amalgamation issue if at least 80% of Queensland Local Authorities were committed to this process.
- Investigate method of funding for the current Western Queensland Councils advertising campaign and the possibility of this being extended.
- Endeavour to counter act concept that Council is in a "Very Weak" financial position.
- Finalise and adopt the 2007/08 budget by 31 July, 2007 and hold a series of public meetings to communicate to residents and ratepayers all relevant budget details.
- Continue to focus on media releases through radio, TV and the local press to enable local ratepayers and residents to be fully informed on Council activities.

CARRIED: (VOTE: 8/0)

4. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Resolution: 2007-0695

Moved: Cr Dawson Seconded: Cr Thompson

That the meeting stand adjourned until a date and time to be advised by the Mayor.

CARRIED: (VOTE: 8/0)

Confirmed:.....

Date:.....

