

BRRAG

Belmont Resident and Ratepayer Action Group Inc.

"To provide an effective voice for the people of Belmont"

26 January 2021

Mayor and Councillors
City of Belmont

Dear Mayor and Councillors

Concerns have been raised by residents over the responses or lack of responses to questions that are being asked during Public Question Time.

At the December 2020 Ordinary Council Meeting, a question was asked about the income received by the Belmont Trust when basketball was previously played at Parry Field. The response (below) was that it does not appear that income and expenditure attributed to those activities has been recorded against the Belmont Trust.

This is disturbing given that there are certain legislative requirements placed on those that operate a Trust. Although finding out information regarding the Trust is like pulling teeth, we understand that all councillors are Trustees. ***If this is accurate and income and expenditure has not been recorded against the Trust why was this not done? Are our councillors liable?***

We also ask given the response, if this is bad management of the Trust, or is it a staff member who has not done their research job properly and therefore the question was not accurately answered? We ask that you respond to this on behalf of the residents.

Mr Paul Hitt
14 McLachlan Way
BELMONT WA 6104

Dear Mr Hitt

**RESPONSE TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE – ANNUAL ELECTORS' MEETING
16 DECEMBER 2020**

In relation to your Question Taken on Notice, the following response is provided.

Question1:

The Belmont Trust area was utilised in the past as a venue for basketball and baseball. Has monies the City of Belmont raised from the rent been placed in the Trust Account, or was this classed as general revenue?

Response:

From the records available it does not appear income or expenditure attributed to those activities has been recorded against the Belmont Trust although given the length of time that has since transpired it is difficult to confirm.

I trust the above information has clarified the City's position.

The BRRAG questions asked at the December 2020 OCM regarding gratuity payments, were not answered and you should all be in receipt of our response to the Acting CEO regarding this. ***Why are we having so much difficulty in getting these questions answered? Has the council got something they do not want us to know?*** Given the run around we are being given, the general consensus is that you are not being open and transparent with us and this is not a good look, especially with the council elections in October.

One of the questions on this topic that was answered however, was that the amount of gratuity paid since 2005 is \$1,745,717 gross. This is a significant amount of ratepayers money. Ratepayers have every right to ask questions, particularly when the payments are more than what is allowed under the Regulations. It appears, based on the Annual Report, there may also be a significant amount of future gratuity payments that are being budgeted for.

In keeping with not being transparent and forthcoming with information, the next difficulty that one particular resident is having is obtaining access to the Belmont Trust minutes. According to the documentation that has been provided to us, she first tried to obtain the minutes on 17 November 2020. She has attended the City's offices and been denied these minutes and was told she had to wait on another staff member responding. She has asked for access at the Electors Meeting and written to the Ombudsman. Still no minutes. Senior executives are now deliberating. The Local Government Act requires Minutes to be made public. Why is this so difficult and is there something to hide?

We can appreciate under the legislation (which incidentally only appears to be followed when it suits), councillors are unable to interfere in the day to day running of the council. This is left to the CEO. As per the 2020 Annual Report, the CEO got a significant increase in salary approved by the councillors.

As our ELECTED members, we are asking that you advise the residents of Belmont in your response if you think this sort of standard of transparency and accountability to the public is acceptable? Do you actually stand for Transparency and Accountability or will this be omitted from upcoming election campaign material? We would also like to know if when assessing the performance of the CEO, inadequate customer response times and inefficiencies as outlined in this letter are given consideration or is this below standard of performance good enough for Belmont?

Please be advised a copy of this letter and your response will be made public to the residents of Belmont. We also remind the Mayor of the ten day response period as outlined in the Customer Service Charter.

Kindest regards
BRRAG Committee.

