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EDITORIAL

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YOUR LETTERS



Otorohanga gardens

I WAS disappointed to read that local contractor Tidy Gardens' services are not being retained to maintain Otorohanga gardens.

I was pleased the council released the tender figures to the public – \$3000 the difference between Tidy Gardens (incumbent) and Downer Group.

"For bad to prevail all that is required is for people to do nothing". I could have moaned about the decision and nothing would have changed. I can ask people for their opinions and sign a petition and nothing will change.

My hope is council and its employees will read this correspondence, listen to the community views and realise the need to consider local opinions and perhaps make the changes to their processes.

Local support for our Tidy Gardens contractor was shown to be strong when 120 signatures were given in under four hours to a recent questionnaire – 120 people were opposed to the Otorohanga District Council's decision to grant the tender for maintaining the town's garden to an out-of-town business.

There were two 'don't knows' and one in support of the decision.

I don't think Tidy Gardens' tender of \$22,000 for an estimated 15-25 hours per week is excessive. These hours are flexible because of seasonal requirements.

However, with up to seven local people working around our town, not only tending the 11 council gardens as well as private gardens, but also picking up rubbish, sweeping up leaves, helping visitors to our town, mowing parks and reserves – our town gardens got some attention every day.

It came as a surprise to me that neither the community board nor our councillors had any input into this decision.

We now have a garden competition between Tidy Gardens tending the hanging baskets, the Otorohanga Club and Countdown's gardens, and, the multi-million business looking after the council's gardens.

Otorohanga District Council's employees made the decision – time will tell whether cheap is better.

The time has come for ratepayers and the community to have more say into what happens in our area.

The council explained to me they have no option but to accept the cheapest tender, providing the tenderer has the equipment and expertise to do the task.

If the council blames central government for these decisions and they have to operate in a manner which puts local,

smaller businesses at a disadvantage, then we should have a public meeting to air both sides' frustrations, clear up any misconceptions and work together constructively to get changes made for the betterment of our community. (Abridged)

Jock Gollan

Otorohanga

CRITICAL comments being made overlook the fact that [Otorohanga District] council has been, and remains, Tidy Gardens' largest customer.

Whilst that company did not retain a gardening contract valued at \$20,000 per year, it still holds three other council contracts with a total value of \$161,000 per year and ODC has helped that business to survive and substantially grow.

It is therefore extremely disappointing that criticism is being directed at council when it has been such a strong and consistent supporter of this local company over the last 10 years.

Adequate real opportunities must however, from time to time be given to suitably capable contractors to compete for council contracts and there can be no exclusive rights for these works.

Making decisions about how council contracts are awarded cannot be just a matter of 'supporting the local company'.

Council also has to balance sometimes conflicting issues of price, quality, value, fairness, competition and consistency.

Those who think that such decisions are simple are failing to appreciate all the factors that need to be considered.

The process to decide how a contract is awarded is conducted by council staff based on the application of pre-set rules.

Councillors and community board members generally have no involvement in contract awarding, to avoid potentially subjective and biased decisions being made by politicians who may be subject to greater external influence. What may start as a genuine intention to help the community can, through external pressure, turn into favouritism and unfairness.

The tendering process is a competition between contractors that must be played according to rules, and like any sporting competition, these rules must be set before the game starts, and not changed during the game or afterwards.

And like a fair sporting contest, the result cannot be known until the game is completed.

There can be no pre-determined winners, and the result cannot be overturned after the game because the crowd's favourite team did not win, or because the

winning margin was small.

The garden contract price margin of \$3228 may seem small, but on a \$20,000 contract, it is over 16%.

Accepting similar additional percentage margins on all council contracts could cost ratepayers millions of dollars.

For those who want to properly understand what council has to consider in making decisions on contracts (and in particular, the Otorohanga gardening contract) further information has been provided on council's website – otode.govt.nz

Dave Clibbery

Chief Executive

Otorohanga District Council

WDC survey

HOW useful is the Waitomo District Council's resident satisfaction survey?

I know the world is always changing.

Even in Mokau where we now have only about 60 permanent residents, but the same number of ratepayers as there were 25 years ago.

It's just that most of the ratepayers now are bach owners.

After Christmas I was talking with Mr Brodie our local councillor about bach owner ratepayers not getting council correspondence.

He was going to look into it, which no doubt, he did.

Since then all ratepayers have received two rate demands by post. [The usual shock]

But the same mailing list is not used for the resident survey questionnaire and council newsletters – why not?

As I have an ongoing issue at the moment involving the Mokau water supply

I have been asking any property owner that I have seen to fill in the survey questionnaire.

I understand that is what the questionnaire is for.

To date, of all the owners I have talked to, only the permanent residents have received the survey papers.

Yes, the council has spare copies available at the Whitebait Inn, but in the winter season not many bach owners are at their bachs.

If the copies at the Whitebait Inn were delivered by courier or council employees, the cost would just about be more than posting the survey to every property owner.

If it's good enough to post to some ratepayers, it should be good enough for all.

Trevor Walshaw

Mokau



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