FINANCE AND PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

Tuesday, 5th January, 2010

Present: Cllr Mrs F A Kemp (Chairman), Cllr P J Homewood (Vice-Chairman), Cllr J R H Clements, Cllr G Court, Cllr D W P Evans, Cllr D Lettington, Cllr Miss A Moloney, Cllr H S Rogers, Cllr C P Smith and Cllr A K Sullivan.

> Councillors Aikman, Mrs Anderson, Baldock, Balfour, Coffin, Heslop, Lancaster, Luker, Rhodes, Thornewell and Worrall were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

> Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allison and Robins.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

FP 10/001

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Miss Moloney declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the item relating to Applications from Parish Councils for Support Towards Capital Projects on the grounds of being a member of Snodland Town Council. She withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

Councillor C Smith declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the item relating to Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief and Rural Rate Relief in that he knew the applicant for the General Store at 1A Riding Lane, Hildenborough. He withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the application concerned.

Councillor Thornewell declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the item relating to Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief and Rural Rate Relief in that he was a custodian trustee of Kingfisher Pre-School. He withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the application concerned.

Councillor Mrs Anderson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the item relating to the Proposed New Lease of 2 River Walk, Tonbridge on the grounds of membership of the Tonbridge Citizens Advice Bureau. She withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

FP 10/002

MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Finance and

Property Advisory Board held on 30 September 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

FP REVENUE ESTIMATES 2010/11 10/003

The report of the Director of Finance referred to the responsibility of the Cabinet under the Constitution for formulating initial draft proposals in respect of the budget. Reference was made to the role of the Advisory Board in assisting the Council and Cabinet in the preparation of the budget within the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Council's overall aims and priorities. An outline was given of the process for referring the Advisory Board's recommendations to the Policy Overview Committee prior to consideration by the Cabinet on 2 February and thereafter by the Council at its budget meeting.

The report set out the framework for consideration of the estimates in terms of the Medium Term Financial Strategy together with a number of service specific issues. The Director of Finance provided an overview of the significant financial pressures potentially affecting the Council arising from the suggestion that at the next Spending Review in 2010 the general government grant could be cut significantly. It was therefore noted that the 2010/11 financial year could be regarded as a "holding year" whilst the outcome of the Spending Review was awaited and a clearer picture of the size of the financial challenge facing the Council began to emerge.

Members acknowledged the significant budgetary pressure likely to confront the Council after the next General Election and comprehensive spending review and the need to undertake a detailed re-examination of the objectives of the Medium Term Financial Strategy including the capital plan process and funding of capital expenditure once a clearer picture emerged. There was therefore an opportunity to review fundamentally and re-engineer the structure of the Council's overall finances in order to provide a better financial platform from which to deliver services. In the interim everything possible would be done from an efficiency point of view to keep costs down although it was considered that nothing too radical should be carried out pending clarity on the potential budget "funding gap" and the outcome of the fundamental review of the Council's overall finances.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the draft estimates contained in the booklet be endorsed;
- (2) within the context of the financial pressures outlined in the report, the Policy Overview Committee be requested to consider the draft revenue estimates contained in the booklet and make appropriate recommendations to the Cabinet for its special meeting on 2 February 2010; and

(3) the broad objectives of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, set out at paragraph 1.2.4 of the report, be reaffirmed in principle at this stage but the objectives including the capital plan process and the funding of capital expenditure be revisited as part of a fundamental review of the Council's overall finances when a clearer picture begins to emerge about the size of the financial challenge faced by the Council.

*Referred to Cabinet

FP CAPITAL PLAN REVIEW 2009/10 10/004

Consideration was given to the report of the Management Team which reviewed the current position of existing Capital Plan schemes (List A). It also recommended new schemes for adding to List C, schemes for deletion from List C, schemes from List C for evaluation and schemes for inclusion on List B from those List C schemes which had been evaluated. Members were reminded of the new approach adopted last year with regard to the preparation of the Capital Plan and it was emphasised that any aspirations in respect of capital schemes needed to be set within the context of the significant financial difficulties facing the Council.

RECOMMENDED: That the following be endorsed for consideration by the Policy Overview Committee:

- (1) the Capital Plan (List A) position as shown in Annex 2 to the report;
- (2) the inclusion in List C of the schemes listed in paragraph 1.5.1 of the report;
- (3) the removal from List C of those schemes noted in paragraph 1.5.2 of the report;
- (4) the selection for evaluation of those List C schemes shown at paragraph 1.6.3 of the report;
- (5) the transfer of the following schemes from List C to List B:

Car Park Enhancement Programme - Phase 3
Tonbridge Castle East Curtain Wall Footpath
Larkfield Leisure Centre: Larkabout Toilets
Angel Centre: Changing/Toilets/Meeting Rooms
Refurbishment of Tonbridge Farm Pavilion
Racecourse Sportsground: Bridge Repair
Hayesbrook School All Weather Pitch
Wrotham School All Weather Pitch
Hill Top/Priory Wood Children's Play Equipment

(6) the retention of the following schemes on List C for further evaluation:

Larkfield Leisure Centre: Fitness Studio.

*Referred to Cabinet

FP APPLICATIONS FROM PARISH COUNCILS FOR SUPPORT 10/005 TOWARDS CAPITAL PROJECTS

The report of the Management Team gave details of applications for "exceptional case" capital grant aid received from Leybourne Parish Council and Snodland Town Council. Referring to the separate report on an interest free loan scheme for capital projects (Minute FP 10/008 refers), consideration was given to whether exceptional grants or loans should be offered to the applicants.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) Leybourne Parish Council be offered a grant of £6,500 subject to the commencement of the project before the end of the current financial year; and
- (2) Snodland Town Council be offered a grant of £9,000 subject to the commencement of the project before the end of the current financial year.

*Referred to Cabinet

FP 10/006

REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2010/11

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Central Services Director and Director of Finance on those fees and charges which fell within the remit of the Cabinet Member for Finance together with any others for which there was no appropriate Advisory Board. In addition the Director of Finance outlined the reasons for applying a discretionary charge for the replacement of lost or misplaced council tax payment cards.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the current photocopying charges be retained at £0.10 (inclusive of VAT) for each page of the same document or additional copies of the same page plus postage as appropriate;
- (2) the annual charges for agendas and reports supplied via the post be maintained at £45 (inclusive of VAT) for Area Planning Committees and £32 (inclusive of VAT) for all other meetings;
- (3) in respect of concessionary travel:
- (i) the price to be charged for the companion pass be retained at £10 in 2010/11;
- (ii) the charge for replacement of lost passes be retained at £10;
- (iii) a £10 contribution towards the Senior Railcard, the Network Card or the Disabled Persons Railcard be continued as an alternative to the free bus travel pass;
- (4) in respect of recovery of legal fees payable by third parties, the

Council charges continue to follow the rates published by the Secretary of State as set out in paragraph 1.5.1 of the report;

- (5) the table of proposed administrative charges for street naming and numbering services set out at paragraph 1.6.3 of the report be adopted with effect from 1 April 2010;
- (6) the table of proposed licensing and registration fees set out in Annex 3 to the report be adopted with effect from 1 April 2010;
- (7) the legislative changes to the personal search fee be accepted and the proposed scale of fees for local land charges searches and enquiries set out in the report be adopted with effect from 1 January 2010; and
- (8) the current nil charge for a replacement payment card be increased to a discretionary charge of £5 per replacement card.

*Referred to Cabinet

FP REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES FOR BUILDING CONTROL 2010/11

The report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure brought forward for consideration as part of the budget setting process for 2010/11 proposals in respect of those fees and charges relating to Building Control.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the Building Control application fees for dwellings and domestic extensions set out in Annex 1 of the report be approved;
- (2) the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure retain the delegated authority, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation, to amend the charge in respect of Approved Document P (Electrical Installations) to respond to market conditions; and
- (3) the Chief Building Control Officer continue to be authorised to negotiate Building Control application fees for other building works with a value exceeding £1million.

*Referred to Cabinet

FP INTEREST FREE LOAN SCHEME FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS 10/008

The report of the Management Team referred to the withdrawal of funding for capital grants to parish councils or voluntary organisations as a result of the significant financial pressures facing the Council. Consideration was given to a proposed alternative scheme for supporting capital projects from parish councils with an interest free loan. It was suggested that the scheme should only be available to parish councils in respect of financing capital projects meriting special consideration. It was also proposed that loans would be capped at

£25,000 with repayment terms normally no longer than five years.

Concern was expressed that smaller parish councils may be discouraged by the length of repayment period and the Director of Finance advised that each application would be considered individually by the Advisory Board and that the scheme could include the ability to extend the repayment period. In response to concerns about eligibility the Director of Finance confirmed that the criteria applied to the previous capital grants scheme would be used to inform her recommendation to the Advisory Board.

RECOMMENDED: That the proposed scheme of interest free loans to parish and town councils for capital projects be approved on the basis outlined in the report and commence from 1 April 2010.

*Referred to Cabinet

FP APPLICATIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF AND RURAL 10/009 RATE RELIEF

Decision Notice D100001MEM

The joint report of the Director of Finance and Cabinet Member for Finance gave details of applications received from current recipients of discretionary rate relief and rural rate relief for renewal from 2010. A new application for discretionary rate relief was also submitted. The applications were considered in accordance with the revised guidelines for the grant of such relief.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) in respect of re-applications for relief shown at Annex 3 to the report no discretionary relief be granted;
- (2) in respect of The Avenues Trust Support Services, Units L & M Great Hollanden Business Centre, Underriver 5% discretionary relief be granted, time limited to 31 March 2013;
- (3) in respect of the new application from the Hyde Charitable Trust, 106 Abery Drive, Larkfield, 20% discretionary relief be awarded, time limited to 31 March 2013;
- (4) in respect of the re-applications for rural rate relief shown at Annex 6 to the report, the current levels of relief continue to be awarded, time limited to 31 March 2013 with the exception of the following:

General Store, 4-6 The Broadway, Hadlow Post Office, 9 Pound Road, East Peckham Post Office, 30 Swan Street, West Malling Public House, The Nevill Bull, Birling; and

(5) in respect of the above named properties, accounts (preferably audited) be sought from the applicants and a report submitted to the next meeting of the Advisory Board to allow further consideration of the applications.

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FP RECOVERY OF COUNCIL TAX 10/010

Decision Notice D100002MEM

The report of the Director of Finance gave details of the use of bankruptcy as a means of recovering unpaid council tax and consideration was given to revised guidelines for staff in initiating potential bankruptcy proceedings.

RECOMMENDED: That the revised guidelines in respect of the use of bankruptcy for the recovery of unpaid council tax, set out at Annex 1 to the report, be approved.

FP BUILDING REPAIRS RESERVE - SIX YEAR EXPENDITURE PLAN 2009/10 - 2014/15

Decision Notice D100003MEM

The report of the Central Services Director presented the outcome of the Management Team's review of the Building Repairs Reserve Expenditure Plan to 2014/15 and gave details of the adjusted provisions which would be included in the draft estimates.

RECOMMENDED: That the Building Repairs Reserve Expenditure Plan to 2014/15 set out at Annex 1 to the report and the financial provisions underlying it shown at Annex 2 to the report, be endorsed.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

FP 10/012

EFFICIENCY MONITORING STATEMENT AS AT SEPTEMBER 2009

The joint report of the Director of Finance and Cabinet Member for Innovation and Improvement provided details of the efficiency gains achieved and projected as at September 2009.

FP 10/013

COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES UPDATE REPORT

The report gave details of recent developments in respect of council tax and business rates including information on the small business multiplier set for 2010/11 and the 2010 business rate revaluation. Details were also given of the council tax base for the year 2010/11 which had been set by the Director of Finance under delegated authority.

FP 10/014

BENEFITS UPDATE

The report provided information on current issues arising in the benefits field including performance of the Benefits Service, staffing and changes to the structure and operation of the Kent Benefit Partnership.

FP 10/015

BENEFITS INVESTIGATION SECTION UPDATE

The report updated the position on the work of the Benefits

Investigation Section.

FP 10/016

CONCESSIONARY FARES UPDATE

The joint report of the Director of Finance and Central Services Director provided an update on current issues relating to concessionary fares including the future transfer of responsibilities to county tier authorities from April 2011, the change in the age of eligibility for concessionary bus travel in line with the changes being made to the state pension age from April 2010 and the Council's response to the consultation on the distribution of the concessionary travel special grant.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

FP 10/017

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chairman moved, it was seconded and

RESOLVED: That as public discussion would disclose exempt information, the following matters be considered in private.

PART 2 - PRIVATE

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

FP 10/018

DEBTS FOR WRITE OFF

(Reason: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Para 2 - Information likely to reveal information about an individual)

Decision Notice D100004MEM

Consideration was given to the writing-off of debts considered to be irrecoverable. Details were also given of debts under £1,000 which had been written-off in accordance with Financial Procedure Rule 17.2 together with cumulative totals of debts written-off in the current and previous financial years and information on budgeted bad debt provision.

RECOMMENDED: That the 14 items shown in the schedule, totalling £52,507.67 be written-off for the reasons stated within the schedule.

FP 10/019

PROPOSED NEW LEASE OF 2 RIVER WALK, TONBRIDGE (Reason: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Para 3 - Financial or business affairs

of any particular person)

Decision Notice D100005MEM

The report of the Central Services Director gave details of the proposed lease of 2 River Walk to Tonbridge Citizens Advice Bureau.

RECOMMENDED: That the proposed new lease of 2 River Walk to Tonbridge CAB, as outlined in the report, be approved.

FP PROPOSED LEASE OF LAND AT OXLEY SHAW LANE, 10/020 LEYBOURNE

(Reason: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Para 3 - Financial or business affairs of any particular person)

Decision Notice D100006MEM

Further to the report circulated with the agenda the Central Services Director provided an update on the proposed lease of an area of land at Oxley Shaw Lane to create a children's play area and advised that the lease should be granted to Leybourne Parish Council which had the ability to sub-let the area of land to Leybourne Community Group.

RECOMMENDED: That the proposed lease, as detailed in the report, be granted to Leybourne Parish Council with the ability for it to sub-let the area of land to Leybourne Community Group.

FP PROPOSED SALE OF CEMETERY LODGE, TONBRIDGE 10/021 (Reason: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Para 3 - Financial or business affairs of any particular person)

Decision Notice D100007MEM

The report of the Central Services Director gave details of the proposed sale of Cemetery Lodge, Tonbridge to the current occupier together with arrangements for possible future provision of alternative office accommodation.

RECOMMENDED: That approval be given for the disposal of Cemetery Lodge, as outlined in the report, together with the specified provision from the capital receipt in the event that alternative office accommodation needs to be provided in the current ground maintenance staff mess room.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

FP CASH IN TRANSIT CONTRACT 10/022 (Reason: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Para 3 – Financial or business affairs of any particular person)

The report of the Director of Finance gave details of the letting of the contract for cash in transit services by the Kent Buying Consortium in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 15 of the Contracts Procedure Rules.

The meeting ended at 2155 hours

RECORD OF DECISION

Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR

Finance

Decision No: D100001MEM Date: 5th January 2010

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief and Rural Rate Relief

(Joint report of Director of Finance and Cabinet Member for Finance)

(Annex 1)

(Annex 2)

(Annex 3)

(Annex 4)

(Annex 5)

(Annex 6)

Details were given of applications received from current recipients of discretionary rate relief and rural rate relief for renewal from 2010. A new application for discretionary rate relief was also submitted. The applications were considered in accordance with the revised guidelines for the grant of such relief.

Following consideration by the Finance and Property Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Finance resolved that:

- 1) in respect of re-applications for relief shown at Annex 3 to the report no discretionary relief be granted;
- 2) in respect of The Avenues Trust Support Services, Units L & M Great Hollanden Business Centre, Underriver 5% discretionary relief be granted, time limited to 31 March 2013;
- 3) in respect of the new application from the Hyde Charitable Trust, 106 Abery Drive, Larkfield, 20% discretionary relief be awarded, time limited to 31 March 2013:
- 4) in respect of the re-applications for rural rate relief shown at Annex 6 to the report, the current levels of relief continue to be awarded, time limited to 31 March 2013 with the exception of the following:

General Store, 4-6 The Broadway, Hadlow

Post Office, 9 Pound Road, East Peckham

Post Office, 30 Swan Street, West Malling

Public House, The Nevill Bull, Birling; and

5) in respect of the above named properties, accounts (preferably audited) be sought from the applicants and a report submitted to the next meeting of the Advisory Board to allow further consideration of the applications.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Finance and Property

Advisory Board of 5 January 2010.

Signed Cabinet Member for D Aikman

Finance:

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

Date of publication: 08 January 2010

RECORD OF DECISION

Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR

Finance

Decision No: D100002MEM Date: 5th January 2010

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Recovery of Council Tax

(Report of Director of Finance) (Annex)

The report gave details of the use of bankruptcy as a means of recovering unpaid council tax and consideration was given to revised guidelines for staff in initiating potential bankruptcy proceedings.

Following consideration by the Finance and Property Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Finance resolved that the revised guidelines in respect of the use of bankruptcy for the recovery of unpaid council tax, set out at Annex 1 to the report, be approved.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Finance and Property Advisory Board of 5 January 2010.

Signed Cabinet Member for D Aikman Finance:

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

Date of publication: 08 January 2010

RECORD OF DECISION

Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR

Finance

Decision No: D100003MEM Date: 5th January 2010

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Building Repairs Reserve - Six Year Expenditure Plan 2009/10 - 2014/15

(Report of Central Services Director)

(Annex 1) (Annex 1A) (Annex 2)

The report presented the outcome of the Management Team's review of the Building Repairs Reserve Expenditure Plan to 2014/15 and gave details of the adjusted provisions which would be included in the draft estimates.

Following consideration by the Finance and Property Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Finance resolved that the Building Repairs Reserve Expenditure Plan to 2014/15 set out at Annex 1 to the report and the financial provisions underlying it shown at Annex 2 to the report, be endorsed.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Finance and Property Advisory Board of 5 January 2010.

Signed Cabinet Member for D Aikman Finance:

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

Date of publication: 08 January 2010

RECORD OF DECISION

Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR

Finance

Decision No: D100004MEM Date: 5th January 2010

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Debts for Write Off

(Reason: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Para 2 - Information likely to reveal

information about an individual)

(Report of Director of Finance)

(Annex)

Approval of the writing-off of debts considered to be irrecoverable was sought. Details were also given of debts under £1,000 which had been written-off in accordance with Financial Procedure Rule 17.2 together with cumulative totals of debts written-off in the current and previous financial years and information on budgeted bad debt provision.

Following consideration by the Finance and Property Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Finance resolved that the 14 items shown in the schedule totalling £52,507.69 be written-off for the reasons stated.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Finance and Property Advisory Board of 5 January 2010 (contains exempt information).

Signed Cabinet Member for D Aikman

Finance:

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

Date of publication: 08 January 2010

RECORD OF DECISION

Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR

Finance

Decision No: D100005MEM Date: 5th January 2010

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Proposed New Lease of 2 River Walk, Tonbridge (Reason: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Para 3 - Financial or business affairs of any particular person)

(Report of Central Services Director)

The report gave details of the proposed lease of 2 River Walk to Tonbridge Citizens Advice Bureau.

Following consideration by the Finance and Property Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Finance resolved that the proposed new lease of 2 River Walk to Tonbridge CAB, as outlined in the report, be approved.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Finance and Property Advisory Board of 5 January 2010 (contains exempt information).

Signed Cabinet Member for D Aikman Finance:

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

Date of publication: 08 January 2010

RECORD OF DECISION

Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR

Finance

Decision No: D100006MEM Date: 5th January 2010

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Proposed Lease of Land at Oxley Shaw Lane, Leybourne (Reason: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Para 3 - Financial or business affairs of any particular person)

(Report of Central Services Director) (Annex)

Further to the report circulated with the agenda the Central Services Director provided an update on the proposed lease of an area of land at Oxley Shaw Lane to create a children's play area and advised that the lease should be granted to Leybourne Parish Council which had the ability to sub-let the area of land to Leybourne Community Group.

Following consideration by the Finance and Property Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Finance resolved that the proposed lease, as detailed in the report, be granted to Leybourne Parish Council with the ability for it to sub-let the area of land to Leybourne Community Group.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Finance and Property Advisory Board of 5 January 2010 (contains exempt information).

Signed Cabinet Member for D Aikman Finance

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

Date of publication: 08 January 2010

RECORD OF DECISION

Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR

Finance

Decision No: D100007MEM Date: 5th January 2010

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Proposed Sale of Cemetery Lodge, Tonbridge (Reason: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Para 3 - Financial or business affairs of any particular person)

(Report of Central Services Director)

The report gave details of the proposed sale of Cemetery Lodge, Tonbridge to the current occupier together with arrangements for possible future provision of alternative office accommodation.

Following consideration by the Finance and Property Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Finance resolved that approval be given for the disposal of Cemetery Lodge, as outlined in the report, together with the specified provision from the capital receipt in the event that alternative office accommodation needs to be provided in the current ground maintenance staff mess room.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Finance and Property Advisory Board of 5 January 2010 (contains exempt information).

Signed Cabinet Member for D Aikman Finance

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

Date of publication: 08 January 2010