

**TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**FINANCE AND PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD**

**Wednesday, 5th January, 2011**

**Present:** Cllr Mrs F A Kemp (Chairman), Cllr P J Homewood (Vice-Chairman), Cllr J R H Clements, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr D W P Evans, Cllr Miss A Moloney, Cllr H S Rogers and Cllr A K Sullivan.

Councillors Aikman, Mrs Anderson, Baldock, Balfour, Coffin, Mrs English, Heslop, Sayer and Worrall were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Robins and C Smith.

**PART 1 - PUBLIC**

**FP  
11/001      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor M Davis declared a personal interest in the item relating to Applications for Rural Rate Relief on the grounds that he acted for the Hilden News Agency.

**FP  
11/002      MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the notes of the meeting of the Finance and Property Advisory Board held on 29 September 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**

**FP  
11/003      REVENUE ESTIMATES 2011/2012**

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 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 1 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 drew attention to the key messages arising from the provisional grant settlement and the

commitment to undertake a fundamental review of the Council's overall finances and re-examination of the objectives in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. It was noted that some work had already been undertaken leading to a remodelling of the Strategy over a 10 year period setting a minimum general revenue reserve balance at £2m.

The Director of Finance advised that based on the provisional settlement for 2010/12 and 2012/13 and an assumption about the further likely cut in general Government grant in the following two years, early projections suggested a budget funding gap of around of £2m. Members were reassured to note that the existence of a robust Medium Term Financial Strategy afforded the Council the time to take a constructive and considered approach to budgetary pressures including dividing the savings target into tranches. However, it was noted that advantage would be taken of savings opportunities and efficiencies as a matter of course throughout the period.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

(1) the draft Revenue Estimates contained in the booklet be endorsed subject to deferral of the transitional increase in Members' Allowances as recommended by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel and removal of the increased provision of £32,550 from the 2011/12 estimates;

(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, as amended by (1) above, and make appropriate recommendations to the Cabinet for its special meeting on 1 February 2011; and

(3) the Council move to a Medium Term Financial Strategy covering a 10 year period and set a minimum general revenue reserve balance of £2m.

**\*Referred to Cabinet**

**FP  
11/004**

### **CAPITAL PLAN REVIEW 2010/2011**

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 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 to 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 the those schemes noted in paragraph 1.5.2 of the report with the exception of the Environmental Improvements to Watergate/Chequers Lawn, Tonbridge; Mereworth Village Entry Enhancements; and Wateringbury Conservation Area;

4) the selection for evaluation of those List C schemes shown at paragraph 1.6.3 of the report with the document management system scheme being selected for fast track evaluation;

(5) the transfer of the following schemes from List C to List B:

Tonbridge Swimming Pool: Disinfection System  
Larkfield Leisure Centre: Energy Saving Measures  
Public Open Spaces Site Improvements  
Tonbridge Memorial Garden Improvements  
IT Initiatives: Homeless Management System

(6) approval of a contribution of £120,000 in this year to the revenue reserve for capital schemes using unallocated Local Authority Business Growth Scheme monies and as a result of the better than expected budget position; and

(7) endorsement of the draft Capital Strategy set out at Annex 5 to the report for adoption and publication on the Council's website.

**\*Referred to Cabinet**

**FP  
11/005**

## **APPLICATIONS FOR RURAL RATE RELIEF**

Decision Notice D110001MEM

The joint report of the Director of Finance and Cabinet Member for Finance gave details of new and renewal applications for rural rate relief which were considered in accordance with the revised guidelines for the grant of such relief.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

(1) in respect of the applications for renewal, discretionary rate relief be awarded on the same basis as before, as set out at Annex 2 to the report, time limited to 31 March 2012; and

(2) in respect of the new applicaton for The Blue Anchor, Grange Road, Platt - 50% discretionary rural rate relief be awarded time-limited to 31 March 2012.

FP  
11/006

## CONCESSIONARY FARES - RAIL CONCESSIONS

Further to Decision No D100127CAB consideration was given to the joint report of the Central Services Director and Director of Finance in respect of the future of the discretionary rail concession option currently offered by the Council. Members were advised that written confirmation had been received from Kent County Council that it did not intend to offer a rail concession as an alternative to the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme bus pass when responsibility for concessionary travel transferred to the County from 1 April 2011. It was noted that the Borough Council would have no specific power to provide a travel concession scheme after this date. An Equality Impact Assessment was annexed to the report and taken into account by Members in considering whether or not to exercise well-being powers to establish a discretionary rail concession scheme.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the Cabinet: 

(1) accept the Equality Impact Assessment as attached at the Annex to the report; and

(2) endorse the position that discretionary rail concessions will not be offered from 2011 when the transfer of concessionary travel responsibilities takes place.

**\*Referred to Cabinet**

FP  
11/007

## REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2011/12

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Central Services Director, Director of Finance and Information Technology Manager 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.

**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 recovery of legal fees payable by third parties, the Council's charges continue to follow the rates published by the Secretary of State as set out at paragraph 1.4.1 of the report;

(4) the table of proposed licensing and registration fees set out in Annex 2 to the report be adopted with effect from 1 April 2011; and

(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 2011.

**\*Referred to Cabinet**

### **MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**

**FP  
11/008**      **BENEFITS UPDATE**

The report provided information on current issues arising in the benefits field including performance and workload of the Benefits Service. Particular reference was made to reforms to housing benefit including details of proposed regulations in respect of Local Housing Allowance. A summary was also given of a White Paper on Universal Credit.

**FP  
11/009**      **COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES UPDATE REPORT**

Details were given of recent developments in respect of council tax and business rates including the council tax base and business rates multipliers for 2011/12.

Congratulations were recorded to the team for the successful collection rates in the current year to date and the previous year end result which, as had been highlighted in a recent media report, placed the Council "best" in Kent in terms of the value of debt outstanding at 31 March 2010.

### **MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**

**FP  
11/010**      **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  
11/011**      **DEBTS FOR WRITE OFF  
(Reason: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Para 2 - Information likely to reveal information about an individual)**

Decision Notice D110002MEM

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 19 items shown in the schedule totalling £98,714.12 be written-off for the reasons stated.

**FP  
11/012**

**PROPOSED LICENCE AGREEMENT FOR TONBRIDGE GATEWAY  
(Reason: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Para 3 - Financial or business affairs  
of any particular person)**

Decision Notice D110003MEM

The report of the Central Services Director gave details of the proposed terms for a licence agreement between the Borough Council and H M Revenue and Customs for use of an area at Tonbridge Gateway.

At Members' request officers undertook to renew the approach to the Department for Works and Pensions regarding the location of some of its services at Tonbridge Gateway.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the proposed terms and conditions for a licence agreement, as outlined in the report, be agreed.

The meeting ended at 2109 hours

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**RECORD OF DECISION**

**Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR  
Finance**

**Decision No: D110001MEM**

**Date: 5th January 2011**

**Decision(s) and Reason(s)**

**Applications for Rural Rate Relief**

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

**(Annex 1)**

**(Annex 2)**

**Details were given of new and renewal applications for rural rate relief which 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 the applications be determined as follows:

- 1) in respect of the applications for renewal, discretionary rate relief be awarded on the same basis as before, as set out at Annex 2 to the report, time-limited to 31 March 2012; and
- 2) in respect of the new application for the Blue Anchor, Grange Road, Platt – 50% discretionary rural rate relief be awarded time-limited to 31 March 2012.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Finance and Property Advisory Board of 5 January 2011.

Signed Cabinet Member for D Aikman  
Finance:

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

**Date of publication: 07 January 2011**

This decision will come into force and may then be implemented on the expiry of 5 working days after publication unless it is called in.

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**RECORD OF DECISION**

**Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR  
Finance**

**Decision No: D110002MEM**

**Date: 5th January 2011**

**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. 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 19 items shown in the schedule totalling £98,714.12 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 2011 (contains exempt information).

Signed Cabinet Member for D Aikman  
Finance:

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

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**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**RECORD OF DECISION**

**Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR  
Finance**

**Decision No: D110003MEM**

**Date: 5th January 2011**

**Decision(s) and Reason(s)**

**Proposed Licence Agreement for Tonbridge Gateway  
(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 terms for a licence  
agreement between the Borough Council and H M Revenue and  
Customs for use of an area at Tonbridge Gateway.**

**Officers undertook to renew the approach to the Department for  
Work and Pensions regarding the location of some of its services  
at Tonbridge Gateway.**

Following consideration by the Finance and Property Advisory Board,  
the Cabinet Member for Finance resolved that the proposed terms and  
conditions for a licence agreement as outlined in the report be agreed.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Finance and Property  
Advisory Board of 5 January 2011 (contains exempt information).

Signed Cabinet Member for D Aikman  
Finance:

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

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