

**TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**FINANCE, INNOVATION AND PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD**

**Wednesday, 22nd July, 2015**

**Present:** Cllr Mrs F A Kemp (Chairman), Cllr Mrs B A Brown (Vice-Chairman), Cllr O C Baldock, Cllr R P Betts, Cllr T Bishop, Cllr J L Botten, Cllr T I B Cannon, Cllr D J Cure, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr D Lettington, Cllr A K Sullivan and Cllr B W Walker

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, M A Coffin, N J Heslop, B J Luker, S C Perry and T C Walker were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs S Bell, R D Lancaster, L J O'Toole and Miss J L Sergison

**PART 1 - PUBLIC**

**FIP 15/33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor N Heslop declared an Other Significant Interest in the item on Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief in respect of a renewal application by the Bridge Trust on the grounds of membership of the Trust's Board. Councillor M Davis also declared an Other Significant Interest in this item on the grounds that his firm had undertaken work for the Bridge Trust. Both Councillors withdrew from the meeting during its consideration.

**FIP 15/34 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the notes of the meeting of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board held on 3 June 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**

**FIP 15/35 APPLICATIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF**

Decision Notice D150059MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation gave details of new and renewal applications for discretionary rate relief which were considered in accordance with the previously agreed criteria for determining such applications.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) in respect of the re-applications for relief shown at Annex 2 to the report, 20% discretionary rate relief be awarded in each case with effect from 1 April 2015 and time limited to 31 March 2017;
- (2) the new application for discretionary rate relief be determined as follows:

14th Tonbridge Sea Scout Group, Adj Sumaria, Barden Road, Tonbridge – 100% discretionary relief be awarded, time limited to 31 March 2017.

## **FIP 15/36 FINANCIAL PLANNING AND CONTROL**

Decision Notice D150060MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation provided information on the Council's key budget areas of salaries, major income streams and investment income. It also gave an update on the approved variations to the revenue budget and areas identified through budget monitoring, summarised to provide an indicative overall budget position for the year which showed a net adverse variance of £209,250.

An update was also given on capital expenditure and variations agreed in relation to the capital plan.

Reference was made to a number of measures included in the Chancellor's Emergency Budget on 8 July 2015, the wider impacts of which on the Council were currently being assessed. Further information would be given as part of the programme of review and update of the Medium Term Financial Strategy together with the effects of the Government's Spending Review in the autumn.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the contents of the report be noted and endorsed.

## **MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**

### **FIP 15/37 BENEFITS UPDATE**

Members were advised of current issues in the benefits field including performance and workload of the Benefits Service together with an initial assessment of the welfare changes set out in the Chancellor's Emergency Budget. Far reaching implications were anticipated from April 2016 and a more detailed analysis of the impact of the changes, undertaken via the local Welfare Reform Group, would be provided at the next meeting of the Advisory Board.

**FIP 15/38 COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES UPDATE**

The report gave details of recent developments in respect of council tax and business rates and it was noted that collection rates remained encouraging, especially the improvement in the rate for working age claimants.

**FIP 15/39 CAPITAL PROGRAMME: POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEWS MONITORING REPORT**

The report identified the post implementation reviews carried out since the July 2014 meeting of the Advisory Board together with the capital schemes for which reviews were due.

**FIP 15/40 IT STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Advisory Board received a presentation updating progress on the various strands of work within the IT Strategy. Particular reference was made to service modernisation including use of eForms and an upgrade of WiFi within the Gibson Building, changes in methods of communication, development of self service for customers and improvements to the website.

**FIP 15/41 BUSINESS RATES REVIEW: DISCUSSION PAPER FROM HM TREASURY - UPDATE**

Further to Decision No D150043MEM, details were given of the final response submitted to HM Treasury on the business rates discussion paper. It was noted that the Leader had sent a copy of the response directly to the Minister for Local Government and the South East Councils Network had included the circumstances of Aylesford Newsprint's demise within its own response to the paper. Feedback was awaited from the Treasury once they had had an opportunity to consider all responses.

**MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**

**FIP 15/42 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**

**FIP 15/43 DEBTS FOR WRITE OFF**

**(LGA 1972 – Sch 12A Paragraph 2 – Information likely to reveal information about an individual)**

Decision Notice D150061MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation sought 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 in the current and previous financial years and information on budgeted bad debt provision.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the 12 items shown in the schedule of amounts over £1,000, totalling £59,743.79 be written-off for the reasons stated within the schedule.

**FIP 15/44 PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF AMENITY LAND AT LONGMEAD WAY, TONBRIDGE**

**(LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of any particular person)**

Decision Notice D150062MEM

The report of the Director of Central Services gave details of proposed terms and conditions for disposal of a strip of amenity land at Longmead Way following a request from an adjacent property owner for incorporation of the land into their garden. It was noted that planning approval would be required for a change of use from amenity to domestic garden and that the area to the rear of the property fell within the Green Belt.

**RECOMMENDED:** That disposal of the area of amenity land at Longmead Way, Tonbridge be approved on the basis of the conditions outlined in the report, subject to planning permission being obtained for a change of use from amenity to domestic garden.

The meeting ended at 8.44 pm