

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
FINANCE, INNOVATION AND PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, 1st June, 2016

Present: Cllr S M King (Chairman), Cllr T C Walker (Vice-Chairman), Cllr J L Botten, Cllr Mrs B A Brown, Cllr T I B Cannon, Cllr D J Cure, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr R D Lancaster, Cllr Miss J L Sergison and Cllr A K Sullivan

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, O C Baldock, P F Bolt, M A Coffin, D Lettington, S C Perry, M R Rhodes and H S Rogers were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs S Bell, R P Betts, T Bishop, F G Tombolis and B W Walker

PART 1 - PUBLIC

FIP 16/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

FIP 16/19 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board held on 13 January 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

FIP 16/20 MULTI-YEAR SETTLEMENT AND ASSOCIATED EFFICIENCY PLAN AND FLEXIBLE USE OF CAPITAL RECEIPTS STRATEGY

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation gave details of the Government's offer of a four year funding settlement to 2019/20, originally made in the context of the current year's local government finance settlement and subsequently clarified by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. It was noted that the deadline for requesting the offer was 14 October 2016 and an efficiency plan was required to be submitted.

A draft submission accepting the offer, should the Council choose to do so, was set out at the Annex to the report and included the Savings and Transformation Strategy which was considered to meet the requirements for an efficiency plan. However, it was understood that the LGA and CIPFA were in discussion regarding the format and content of any

submissions so the Council's application for the offer might need to be adapted accordingly.

Reference was made to Government guidance recommending preparation of an annual Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy and the draft submission also contained a statement regarding the Council's strategy for the flexible use of capital receipts in 2016/17.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the submission accepting the Government offer of a four year funding settlement to 2019/20, as set out at Annex 1 to the report and the accompanying Appendix 1, be endorsed and commended to the Council subject to inclusion of a statement regarding the Council's position in respect of the two key questions on business rates baseline and New Homes Bonus outlined in paragraph 1.1.6 of the report;
- (2) the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy for 2016/17, referred to in paragraph 1.3.3 of the report, be endorsed; and
- (3) the Director of Finance and Transformation, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property, be authorised to adjust the format of the submission in the light of the discussions by the LGA and CIPFA.

***Referred to Cabinet**

FIP 16/21 APPLICATIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

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) the re-applications for discretionary relief shown at Annex 3 to the report be determined as follows:

20% discretionary rate relief be awarded to Kings Hill Youth Centre with effect from 1 April 2015 and time limited to 31 March 2017;

consideration of the application regarding Hadlow Post Office be deferred to enable more information to be obtained concerning the relocation of the Post Office;

- (2) the new applications for discretionary rate relief be determined as follows:

Housing & Care 21, Flat 4 Watercress Court, 98 Mill Street, East Malling – 100% discretionary rate relief be awarded, back dated to 1 April 2015 and time limited to 31 March 2017; and

Hammersmith Martial Arts Club, Rear 130 Vale Road, Tonbridge – 20% discretionary rate relief be awarded, back dated to 22 April 2015 and time limited to 31 March 2017.

FIP 16/22 FINANCIAL PLANNING AND CONTROL

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 for the year ended 31 March 2016. It also gave details of the variations agreed in relation to the revenue budget, summarised to provide an overall budget outturn position for 2015/16 which showed a net favourable variance of £294,629.

Details were provided of variations identified through budgetary control in respect of 2016/17 which showed a net favourable variance of £182,800 which would contribute towards the year's savings target. An update was also given on capital expenditure and variations agreed in relation to the capital plan.

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

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

FIP 16/23 BENEFITS UPDATE

Members were advised of current issues arising in the benefits field including performance and workload of the Benefits Service, progress with the rollout of Universal Credit, various aspects of welfare reform and implications for housing benefit subsidy. Reference was made to the consultation following the review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and a presentation given of the video to be placed on the website. Members made suggestions on this and the proposed cards to be distributed to consultees.

FIP 16/24 COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES UPDATE

The report gave details of recent developments in respect of council tax and business rates including the final collection rates for the year 2015/16, the former of which had exceeded the target set and constituted the highest collection rate in Kent. An update was given at the meeting for the collection rates for 2016/17 as at 31 May 2016 which were 17.39% for council tax and 21.32% for business rates. Members commended the staff involved for the rates achieved. It was also

suggested that rates exclusive of direct debit payments be presented for comparison in future.

FIP 16/25 PUBLICATION OF ALLOWANCES PAID TO MEMBERS DURING THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2015/16

The Advisory Board received a copy of the statement of the actual allowances paid to Members during the financial year 2015/16 which had been published in accordance with Regulation 15(3) of the Local Authorities (Members Allowance) (England) Regulations 2003.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

FIP 16/26 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 16/27 DEBTS FOR WRITE OFF

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

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation recommended 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 20 items shown in the schedule of amounts over £1,000, totalling £60,214.35 be written-off for the reasons stated within the schedule.

The meeting ended at 8.37 pm