

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

MINUTES

Wednesday, 12th January, 2022

Present: Cllr M C Base (Chairman), Cllr R I B Cannon (Vice-Chairman), Cllr T Bishop, Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr C Brown, Cllr A E Clark, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr M R Rhodes, Cllr H S Rogers, Cllr Mrs M Tatton and Cllr C J Williams

(Note: As Councillor R W Dalton was unable to attend in person and participated via MS Teams he was unable to vote on any matters)

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, Mrs P A Bates, V M C Branson, M A Coffin, D Harman, N J Heslop, M A J Hood, D Keers, Mrs F A Kemp, B J Luker, Mrs A S Oakley, W E Palmer, J L Sergison and K B Tanner participated via MS Teams and joined the discussion when invited to do so by the Chairman in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor F G Tombolis

PART 1 - PUBLIC

FIP 22/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

FIP 22/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board held on 15 September 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

FIP 22/3 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2022/23

The report of the Management Team brought forward for consideration, as part of the Budget setting process for 2022/23, proposals in respect of those fees and charges that were the responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property or not reported elsewhere. Members' attention was drawn to the supplementary report which set out proposals in respect of building control fees.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the legal charges follow the rates set out in 1.2.1 of the report for 2022/23 and continue to reflect the existing practices highlighted in 1.2 of the report;
- (2) the proposed scale of fees for local land charges searches and enquiries set out at Annex 1 to the report be adopted with effect from 1 April 2022;
- (3) the current photocopying charges of £0.10 (inclusive of VAT) for each page of the same document or additional copies of the same page plus postage as appropriate be retained;
- (4) the fee Schedule for Street Naming and Numbering set out in section 1.5 of the report be adopted with effect from 1 April 2022;
- (5) the amount of Council Tax and Business Rate court costs charged in 2021/22 remain the same for the 2022/23 financial year (as set out in 1.7 of the report);
- (6) the fees and charges 2022/23 related to Tonbridge Castle tours (as set out in 1.8.2 of the report), fees for schools (as set out in 1.8.4 and 1.8.7 of the report) and the fee models for ceremonies (as set out in 1.8.8 to 1.8.12 of the report) be approved; and
- (7) a rounded 2% increase to the Building Control Charges, as set out in Annex 1 to the supplementary report, be adopted with effect from 1 April 2022.

***Referred to Cabinet**

FIP 22/4 REVENUE ESTIMATES 2022/23

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation referred to the responsibility of the Cabinet under the Constitution for formulating initial proposals in respect of the Budget. Reference was made to the role of the Advisory Board in assisting the Cabinet and Council in the preparation of the budget within the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the Council's priorities.

Particular reference was made to the latest projected funding gap and the need to find over £1.5M worth of savings over the next three years. Attention was drawn to the difficulties experienced within the budget setting process of incorporating an estimate of the scale of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Borough Council's finances in 2022/23 and over the medium term.

Members enquired as to the makeup of the budget heading “General Advice to Parish Councils” and after discussion requested that details be reported to the next meeting of the Advisory Board in May. In addition, questions were raised about the spend on consultancy fees and it was agreed that the Director of Finance and Transformation would share a report generated from the financial ledger with the Chairman.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) Cabinet take into account the currently predicted funding gap, including the £1.5M savings which must be made over the next three years, when it considers the draft Revenue Estimates contained at Annex 1 to the report at its special meeting on 10 February 2022; and
- (2) the Savings and Transformation Strategy be updated to reflect the latest projected budget gap as part of the budget setting process.

***Referred to Cabinet**

FIP 22/5 CAPITAL PLAN REVIEW 2021/22

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Finance and Transformation which reviewed the current position of the existing Capital Plan (List A). It also recommended schemes for addition to List C, some existing List schemes for deletion or evaluation and schemes for inclusion on List B from those List C schemes previously selected for evaluation or in certain circumstances identified for Fast-Track evaluation. It was noted that the Appendix to Annex 1 to the report was set out in the private part of the agenda as it contained exempt information (Minute No FIP 22/11 refers).

RECOMMENDED: That the following be endorsed for consideration by the Cabinet

- (1) the Capital Plan (List A) position as shown in Annex 1 be endorsed and the addition of the proposed purchase of the freehold of 47 High Street, Tonbridge to the Capital Plan under urgency provisions be noted;
- (2) the amendment of List C as detailed in paragraph 1.5.3 of the report;
- (3) the selection of those schemes listed in paragraph 1.6.4 of the report for evaluation including the two schemes recommended for Fast-Track evaluation;

- (4) the transfer of the two schemes shown in paragraph 1.7.3 from List C to List B; and
- (5) the Capital Strategy as set out at Annex 4 to the report be endorsed for adoption by Council and publication on the Council's website.

***Referred to Cabinet**

FIP 22/6 CORPORATE DEBT RECOVERY POLICY

(Decision Notice D220001MEM)

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation provided details of the outcome of the review of the Council's Corporate Debt Recovery Policy.

RECOMMENDED: That the Corporate Debt Recovery Policy, as set out at Annex 1 to the report, be approved for publication to the Council's website.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

FIP 22/7 REVENUE AND BENEFITS UPDATE

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation detailed recent developments in respect of council tax, business rates, council tax reduction and housing benefits.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

FIP 22/8 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 22/9 CONTRACT ARRANGEMENTS COVERING THE COUNCIL'S
BANKING, MERCHANT ACQUIRER, INSURANCE AND CASH
COLLECTION SERVICE CONTRACTS**

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

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation detailed the approach taken in progressing new Banking Merchant Acquirer Services, Insurance and Cash Collection contracts. It also provided an update on alternative cash payment facilities.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the progress made in renegotiating both the banking and merchant acquirer services contracts be noted and delegated authority be granted to the Director of Finance and Transformation, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property, to finalise the negotiations;
- (2) the approach to be adopted in respect of the retendering of the Council's insurance arrangements be noted and endorsed and delegated authority be granted to the Director of Finance and Transformation, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property, to award the contract to the successful tenderer following the outcome of the tender exercise; and
- (3) the current situation regarding renewal of the cash collection contract and securing alternative cash payment facilities be noted.

***Referred to Cabinet**

FIP 22/10 DEBTS FOR WRITE-OFF

(Decision Notice D220002MEM)

(Reasons: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 2 – Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual)

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation sought approval for the writing-off of debts that were considered to be irrecoverable.

RECOMMENDED: That the 4 items shown in the schedule of amounts over £5,000, totalling £36,576.68 be written off for the reason stated in the schedule.

FIP 22/11 CAPITAL PLAN REVIEW 2021/22

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

Appendix 1 to the Capital Plan Annex 1 List A was submitted in private as it contained exempt information (Minute No FIP 22/5 refers).

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

FIP 22/12 47 HIGH STREET, TONBRIDGE

(Decision Notice D220003MEM)

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

The report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive set out details of the proposed purchase of 47 High Street, Tonbridge.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the purchase of the freehold interest of 47 High Street as set out in the report be approved; and
- (2) the funding arrangements for the proposed purchase via the Urgent Decision taken under the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules be noted.

FIP 22/13 PROPOSED SALE OF CAR PARKING SPACES 2 AND 3 AT PEMBURY GROVE, TONBRIDGE

(Decision Notice D220004MEM)

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

The report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive set out details of the proposed sale of two parking spaces at Pembury Grove in Tonbridge.

RECOMMENDED: That the sale of two parking spaces on the terms identified in the report be approved.

FIP 22/14 PROPOSED SURRENDER OF EXISTING LEASE AND LETTING OF LAND AT THE REAR OF 38-52 BARDEN PARK ROAD, TONBRIDGE

(Decision Notice D220005MEM)

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

The report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive set out details of the surrender of an existing lease and the proposed letting of land at the rear of 38-52 Barden Park Road, Tonbridge.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the surrender of the existing lease be accepted; and
- (2) approval be given to a new lease of the land on the terms detailed in the report.

FIP 22/15 PROPOSED LETTING OF UNIT 29 MARTIN SQUARE, LARKFIELD

(Decision Notice D220006MEM)

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

The report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive set out details of the proposed letting of Unit 29 Martin Square, Larkfield.

RECOMMENDED: That, subject to investigating whether the lease can be 'contracted out' of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, approval be given to the letting of Unit 29, Martin Square on the terms set out in the report.

FIP 22/16 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS LEASE ARRANGEMENTS

(Decision Notice D220007MEM)

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

The joint report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services set out the proposed lease arrangements in respect of the

contract to install electric vehicle charging points in a number of Council car parks.

RECOMMENDED: That approval be given to grant leases to Connected Kerb in relation to the provision of Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs) on the terms detailed in the report.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm
having commenced at 6.30 pm