

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE, INNOVATION AND PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, 21st September, 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 S R J Jessel, Cllr R D Lancaster, Cllr Miss J L Sergison, Cllr A K Sullivan, Cllr F G Tombolis and Cllr B W Walker

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, O C Baldock, P F Bolt, M A Coffin, N J Heslop, D Lettington 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 and T Bishop

PART 1 - PUBLIC

FIP 16/40 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor M Davis declared an Other Significant Interest in the item on Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust IT Infrastructure and Support Arrangements on the grounds of being one of the Council's appointees to the Board of the Trust. He withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

FIP 16/41 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board held on 20 July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

FIP 16/42 FINANCIAL PLANNING AND CONTROL

Decision Notice D160067MEM

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 variations agreed in relation to the revenue budget and areas identified through revenue budget monitoring, summarised to provide an indicative overall budget position for the year which showed a net favourable variance of £473,050.

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.

FIP 16/43 APPLICATION FOR DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

Decision Notice D160068MEM

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

RECOMMENDED: That the new application for discretionary relief be determined as follows:

The Air-Britain Trust Ltd, Unit 1A Munday Works, Morley Road, Tonbridge - no discretionary relief be awarded.

FIP 16/44 RURAL RATE RELIEF - RURAL SETTLEMENT LIST

Decision Notice D160069MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation referred to the requirement to review the Council's rural settlement list and recommended that the current list should be retained unaltered for the financial year 2017/18.

RECOMMENDED: That the current rural settlement list remain in force for the year 2017/18.

FIP 16/45 COUNCIL TAX RECOVERY POLICY

Decision Notice D160070MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation sought approval of an update to the Council Tax Recovery Policy in the light of the introduction of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and to refer to the ability to make deductions from a person's Universal Credit entitlement. It was noted that the current amount being deducted from a resident's benefit entitlement was insufficient to clear a year's council tax plus court costs. The importance of addressing numerous small debts was recognised and the proposed changes to the policy provided an option to use enforcement agents if necessary.

RECOMMENDED: That the amended Corporate Debt Recovery Policy set out at Annex 1 to the report be approved.

FIP 16/46 REFORMING BUSINESS RATES APPEALS

Decision Notice D160071MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation referred to a further Department for Communities and Local Government consultation on proposals for reforming the business rates appeals process. It was intended that the reformed system would apply when the new rating list came into effect in April 2017. A suggested response was presented for submission by the 11 October deadline and advocated proportionate fees to discourage speculative appeals.

RECOMMENDED: That the proposed response to the latest consultation on reforming the business rates appeals process, as set out at Annex 1 to the report, be endorsed.

FIP 16/47 TONBRIDGE CASTLE GATEHOUSE CHARGES

Decision Notice D160072MEM

The joint report of the Director of Central Services and Director of Finance and Transformation recommended revised charges for the Tonbridge Castle Gatehouse attraction for implementation from 1 April 2017. The proposals took into account prevailing inflation figures, competitor charges and local market conditions.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the proposed charges for Tonbridge Castle Gatehouse, as set out in the report, be approved for implementation from 1 April 2017; and
- (2) the charges be reflected in the appropriate tourism marketing material.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

FIP 16/48 REVENUES AND BENEFITS UPDATE

The report gave details of recent developments in respect of council tax, business rates, council tax reduction and housing benefits. It was noted that a full report would be presented to the Cabinet on 12 October on the responses to the consultation on the Council's working age council tax reduction scheme. In addition the Department for Work and Pensions had advised that the new levels of benefit cap for non-working households would now begin in mid-November.

FIP 16/49 RIVER WALK IMPROVEMENTS

The report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services provided an update on planned improvements to River Walk, Tonbridge and confirmed action being taken to grant a licence for works to be progressed on Council owned land. It was noted that the project, being undertaken by Kent County Council in close liaison with officers of the Borough Council, was fully funded by the Local Growth Fund and would significantly enhance the riverside location to encourage visitors and stimulate local growth.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

FIP 16/50 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 16/51 DEBTS FOR WRITE OFF

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

Decision Notice D160073MEM

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 32 items shown in the schedule of amounts over £1,000, totalling £103,038.44 be written-off for the reasons stated within the schedule.

**FIP 16/52 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING LEISURE TRUST
IT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS**

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

Decision Notice D160074MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation set out the case for a change in responsibility for IT infrastructure and support arrangements to Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust. It was concluded that on both financial and operational grounds ownership and replacement of IT equipment, together with IT support, should be the responsibility of the Trust. A capital plan evaluation was presented in support of the proposal.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the proposed change to the IT infrastructure and support arrangements with Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust be approved;
- (2) the “lump sum” payment be met from the Invest to Save Reserve; and
- (3) the Capital Plan and Management Agreement be updated accordingly.

FIP 16/53 PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF AMENITY LAND AT ROMAN CLOSE, CHATHAM

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

Decision Notice D160075MEM

The report of the Director of Central Services gave details of an application to purchase an area of amenity land at Roman Close submitted by adjoining property owners together with proposed terms and conditions for such a disposal.

RECOMMENDED: That approval be given for the disposal of the amenity land on the basis of the conditions outlined in the report.

FIP 16/54 PROPOSAL FOR CASTLE LODGE, TONBRIDGE

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

Decision Notice D160076MEM

The report of the Director of Central Services gave details of a proposal to refurbish Castle Lodge to create a modern self-contained office unit for marketing at a commercial rent. It was noted that the cost of refurbishment could be met from the Council’s Building Repairs Expenditure Plan.

RECOMMENDED: That the refurbishment of Castle Lodge be approved and a commercial lease be negotiated with specific terms agreed by the Director of Central Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property.

FIP 16/55 NEW LEASE TO TONBRIDGE INDOOR BOWLS CLUB

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

Decision Notice D160077MEM

The report of the Director of Central Services gave details of a request from Tonbridge Angels Indoor Bowls Club for a new long lease of their site on similar terms and conditions to the current lease.

It was considered that all options should be explored concerning the future lease term and further advice obtained on valuation issues around the land, building and repairing obligations.

RECOMMENDED: That further consideration of the matter be deferred pending advice on future options and clarification of valuation issues.

FIP 16/56 REQUEST BY SIX IN ONE CLUB, TONBRIDGE FOR NEW LONG LEASE

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

Decision Notice D160078MEM

Further to Decision No D160013MEM approving a new 10 year lease to the Six in One Club, the report of the Director of Central Services gave details of a subsequent request by the Club for a new lease of a term of 25 years. An update was given at the meeting following receipt of representations from a local Member.

RECOMMENDED: That a new lease of 25 years be refused but if, as reported, the replacement windows have been contractually commissioned, then a contribution be made towards these previously agreed works applicable under the 10 year lease, up to the Council's budgeted amount and subject to their satisfactory completion.

The meeting ended at 9.09 pm