

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE, INNOVATION AND PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, 4th January, 2017

Present: Cllr S M King (Chairman), Cllr T C Walker (Vice-Chairman), 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 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, Mrs A S Oakley, S C Perry, H S Rogers and R V Roud were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs S Bell, Mrs B A Brown and S R J Jessel

PART 1 - PUBLIC

FIP 17/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor N Heslop declared an Other Significant Interest in the item on Review of Fees and Charges in respect of concessionary users of Tonbridge Castle Council Chamber on the grounds of membership of the Board of the Bridge Trust. He withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this matter.

In the interests of transparency, Councillors M Davis and R Betts advised that they were the Council's appointees to Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust, a number of whose facilities featured in the Capital Plan.

FIP 17/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board held on 21 September 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

FIP 17/3 REVENUE ESTIMATES 2017/18

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. An outline was given of the process for referring the Advisory Board's recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to consideration by the Cabinet on 9 February and thereafter by the Council at its Budget meeting.

The report set out the framework for considering the estimates in terms of the MTFS together with a number of Service specific issues. The report indicated the factors to be taken into account when updating the MTFS and referred to the Savings and Transformation Strategy (STS) which provided a structure and focus for addressing the significant financial challenge facing the Council. It was noted that the MTFS would continue to be updated as more information became available and the targets and timescales within the STS would be revisited and realigned with the latest projected funding gap during the budget setting process.

The Director of Finance and Transformation introduced the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement including the Council's acceptance of the multi-year settlement to 2019/20 and drew attention to the key messages arising from the outcome of the consultation on New Homes Bonus funding. It was considered that a robust response to the settlement consultation should be submitted by the 13 January deadline in view of the changes to the New Homes Bonus scheme which would bring added funding pressure for district councils and increased risk to financial sustainability. The Director of Finance and Transformation presented the suggested response, circulated before the meeting, which was endorsed by Members.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the proposed response to the provisional local government finance settlement 2017/18, as set out at Annex 1 to the report, be supported subject to the answers to appropriate questions being prefixed by the word "No" for additional emphasis, and the response be submitted by the consultation deadline;
- (2) the draft Revenue Estimates contained in the Booklet be endorsed for consideration by the Cabinet at its special meeting on 9 February 2017; and
- (3) the Savings and Transformation Strategy be updated to reflect the latest projected "funding gap" as part of the budget setting process.
***Referred to Cabinet**

FIP 17/4 CAPITAL PLAN REVIEW 2016/17

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 C schemes for deletion or evaluation and schemes for inclusion on List B from those List C schemes previously selected for evaluation. Members were reminded that any aspirations in respect of capital schemes needed to be set within the context of the significant financial challenge facing the Council.

RECOMMENDED: That the following be endorsed for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- (1) the Capital Plan (List A) position as shown in Annex 2 to the report;
- (2) the amendment of List C as detailed in paragraph 1.5.3 of the report;
- (3) the selection for evaluation of those List C schemes shown in paragraph 1.6.4 of the report including two for fast track evaluation;
- (4) the transfer of the schemes listed in paragraph 1.7.3 of the report from List C to List B; and
- (5) the draft Capital Strategy as set out at Annex 5 to the report be endorsed for adoption and publication on the Council's website.

***Referred to Cabinet**

FIP 17/5 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2017/18

The report of the Management Team brought forward for consideration as part of the Budget setting process for 2017/18 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.

It was noted that there would be a fundamental review of operations at Tonbridge Castle in the light of changes in the Gateway facility.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) in respect of the recovery of legal fees payable by third parties, the Council's fees continue to follow the Supreme Court guideline hourly rates as set out at paragraph 1.2.1 of the report;
- (2) the proposed scale of fees for local land charges searches and enquiries set out in the report be adopted with effect from 1 April 2017, noting that property search fees are to be subject to VAT as shown in the table at Annex 1 to the report from 1 January 2017 unless HMRC confirms that any element shown as Vatable should not be subject to VAT;

- (3) the current photocopying charges of 10p (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 proposed charges for Tonbridge Castle Chamber as set out in Annex 4 to the report be approved for implementation from 1 April 2017;
- (5) the proposed charges for weddings at Tonbridge Castle as outlined in paragraph 1.6.3 of the report be approved for implementation from 1 April 2018;
- (6) the fees schedule for street naming and numbering set out in section 1.8 of the report be adopted with effect from 1 April 2017; and
- (7) the amount of council tax and business rate Court costs recharged remain as set out at paragraph 1.9.2 of the report for the 2017/18 financial year.

***Referred to Cabinet**

FIP 17/6 BUILDING REGULATION FEES

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health and Director of Finance and Transformation which referred to the annual review of fees schedules and recommended amendments to the charging regime to cover more accurately the costs of the fee earning aspects of the Building Control Partnership service provided with Sevenoaks District Council. Members were advised of some changes in staffing of the service.

RECOMMENDED: That the revised Building Control Charges, as detailed in Annex 1 to the report, be approved and adopted from 1 April 2017.

***Referred to Cabinet**

FIP 17/7 REVIEW OF PRE-APPLICATION PLANNING CHARGING REGIME

The joint report of the Director of Finance and Transformation and Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health provided an update on the pre-application procedures for planning and reviewed the protocol and scale of charges introduced in 2016 in accordance with Decision Number D160018CAB.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the updated protocol for providing Pre-Application and Other Technical Planning Advice, as set out at Annex 1 to the report, be adopted; and

- (2) the Pre-Application Charging Schedule for 2017/18, as set out at Annex 2 to the report, be adopted.

***Referred to Cabinet**

FIP 17/8 APPLICATION FOR DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

Decision Notice D170001MEM

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:

Hillsong Church London, The River Centre, Medway Wharf Road, Tonbridge - no discretionary relief be awarded.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

FIP 17/9 REVENUES AND BENEFITS UPDATE REPORT

The report gave details of recent developments in respect of council tax, business rates, council tax reduction and housing benefits. Reference was made to the announcement in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement that Rural Rate Relief would be doubled from 1 April 2017. The report also indicated the council tax base set for the financial year 2017/18.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

FIP 17/10 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 17/11 DEBTS FOR WRITE OFF

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

Decision Notice D170002MEM

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 23 items shown in the schedule of amounts over £1,000, totalling £86,351.07 be written-off for the reasons stated within the schedule.

FIP 17/12 RENEWAL OF CASH COLLECTION CONTRACT AND COUNCIL BANKING CONTRACT

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

Decision Notice D170003MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation provided an update on the outcome of the countywide tender exercise, carried out on behalf of 12 authorities in Kent, for provision of cash collection services. Due to the timescale for commencement of the new contract, it had been necessary for the result of the tender exercise to be accepted in advance of the meeting following consultation with the Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property and Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Details were also given of action taken in accordance with Contracts Procedure Rules to extend the Council's current banking contract until 31 March 2018.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the decision of the Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property and Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to accept the result of the cash collection tendering exercise and the appointment of Contract Security Services Limited be endorsed; and
- (2) the contract extension in respect of the Council's Bankers be noted.

FIP 17/13 PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF LAND ADJACENT TO FIELDING DRIVE, LARKFIELD

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

Decision Notice D170004MEM

The report of the Director of Central Services gave details of proposed terms and conditions in respect of the disposal of an area of amenity land adjacent to Fielding Drive following a request to purchase by an adjoining property owner.

RECOMMENDED: That disposal of the area of amenity land adjacent to Fielding Drive, Larkfield 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.

FIP 17/14 LICENCE AGREEMENT FOR USE OF LAND AS PERMISSIVE FOOTPATH ADJACENT TO BAILEY BRIDGE, AYLESFORD

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

Decision Notice D170005MEM

The report of the Director of Central Services gave details of a proposed licence agreement with Kent County Council for use of land owned by the Borough Council adjacent to the Bailey Bridge car park, Aylesford as a permissive footpath.

RECOMMENDED: That approval be given for a licence to Kent County Council for a permissive footpath as identified in the report.

The meeting ended at 9.07 pm