

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE, INNOVATION AND PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, 23rd May, 2018

Present: Cllr M C Base (Chairman), Cllr R D Lancaster (Vice-Chairman), Cllr R P Betts, Cllr T Bishop, Cllr V M C Branson, Cllr Mrs B A Brown, Cllr T I B Cannon, Cllr D J Cure, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr Miss J L Sergison, Cllr A K Sullivan and Cllr F G Tombolis

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, O C Baldock, M A Coffin, N J Heslop, D Lettington, 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 J L Botten and S M King

PART 1 - PUBLIC

FIP 18/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Members declared an Other Significant Interest in the item on Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief in respect of renewal applications by the organisations indicated; they withdrew from the meeting during their consideration:

Councillor R Betts (member of Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust Board)

Councillor M Davis (member of Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust Board and vice-president of Tonbridge Juddians RFC)

Councillor N Heslop (member of The Bridge Trust Board)

In the interests of transparency the following Members advised that they were social members of the organisations indicated but were not in a position of control or management: Councillor Mrs J Anderson (Hadlow Bowls Club and Hadlow Cricket Club); Councillor O Baldock and Councillor R Lancaster (Tonbridge Juddians RFC).

FIP 18/17 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board held on 3 January 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

FIP 18/18 APPLICATIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

Decision Notice D180029MEM

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

The practice of advising organisations that there could be a reduction in the level of relief awarded in the future was endorsed. It was considered that the re-applications from the Tonbridge Juddians RFC and K Sports Management Limited should be deferred to enable a review of their accounts and level of business activity. A requirement for organisations to reapply every two years was generally favoured with the exception of scout/guides groups which were regarded as “de minimis” in terms of the level of relief awarded.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) consideration of the re-applications from the Tonbridge Juddians RFC and K Sports Management Limited be deferred pending receipt of their accounts and a review of the level of relief awarded;
- (2) organisations generally be asked to reapply for relief every two years with the exception of scout/guides groups;
- (3) subject to (1) and (2) above, in respect of the re-applications, discretionary rate relief and discretionary rural rate relief be awarded as set out at Annexes 3 and 4 to the report respectively, with effect from 1 April 2018 and time limited to 31 March 2020 (with the exception of scout/guides groups which shall have no time limit); and
- (4) the new applications for discretionary rate relief be determined as follows:

Ellenor, Part Unit 1e, Mereworth Business Centre, Danns Lane, Watlington – 20% discretionary rate relief be awarded, backdated to 1 April 2017 and time limited to 31 March 2020;

The Wheels on Debussy, 6 Angel Walk, Tonbridge – 100% discretionary rate relief be awarded, time limited to 31 March 2020.

FIP 18/19 FINANCIAL PLANNING AND CONTROL

Decision Notice D180030MEM

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 2018. It also gave details of the variations agreed in relation to the revenue budget, summarised to provide an overall provisional budget outturn position for 2017/18 which showed a net favourable variance of £639,735, affording the opportunity to transfer £500,000 to the Property Investment Fund Reserve which would be considered by the Cabinet on 6 June. Regarding the Business Rates Retention Scheme for 2017/18 it was noted that, for the first time since the introduction of the scheme in 2013, the Council was above the baseline set.

Details were provided of variations identified through budget monitoring in respect of the first month of 2018/19 which showed a net favourable variance of £3,424. An update was also given on capital expenditure and variations agreed in relation to the capital plan for the year ended March 2018 and the month of April 2018.

Reference was made to correspondence from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in respect of passing on local council tax support funding to parish and town councils together with the response submitted. The Leader updated the position on representations made to the Minister via the local Members of Parliament.

RECOMMENDED: That

The contents of the report be noted and endorsed.

FIP 18/20 CORPORATE DEBT RECOVERY POLICY

Decision Notice D180031MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation gave details of the outcome of a review of the Council's Corporate Debt Recovery Policy and presented for approval an updated policy containing minor changes.

RECOMMENDED: That

The revised Corporate Debt Recovery Policy set out at Annex 1 to the report be approved for publication on the Council's website.

FIP 18/21 IT STRATEGY UPDATE

Decision Notice D180032MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation presented the draft IT Strategy for 2018 – 2022 setting out aims and ambitions at a high level for this period. It was noted that the new document set out strategic objectives which would be underpinned by projects to deliver

those goals. Particular reference was made to the priorities of reviewing the business system, use of mobile devices, improvement of the website, customer service and transformation, and training for staff and Members.

Attention was drawn to a number of minor stylistic amendments made to the document following observations by the Chairman of the Advisory Board.

RECOMMENDED: That

The IT Strategy for the period 2018 to 2022, as set out at Annex 1 to the report, be approved subject to action AP4 being strengthened to include the implementation of improvements in the website development plan.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

FIP 18/22 REVENUES AND BENEFITS UPDATE

The report gave details of recent developments in respect of council tax, business rates, council tax reduction and housing benefits. Members were pleased to note that the council tax collection rate for 2017/18 was the highest in Kent for the third year running. The performance of the Benefits Service was also above the national and Kent average in terms of processing new claims and changes in circumstances.

It was noted that whilst Universal Credit roll-out in the Borough generally remained scheduled for November 2018, a number of job centres in post code areas affecting Tonbridge and Malling were going live by the end of May. Arrangements were accordingly being made for a briefing note and training to be made available to Members and staff.

FIP 18/23 PUBLICATION OF ALLOWANCES PAID TO MEMBERS DURING 2017/18

The Advisory Board received a copy of the statement of the actual allowances paid to Members during the financial year 2017/18 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 18/24 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 18/25 DEBTS FOR WRITE OFF

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

Decision Notice D180033MEM

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 13 items shown in the schedule of amounts over £1,000, totalling £27,481.45 be written-off for the reasons stated within the schedule.

FIP 18/26 LAND AT COMMERCIAL ROAD, TONBRIDGE

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

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Central Services which gave details of circumstances arising in respect of an area of Council owned land at Commercial Road, Tonbridge and analysed options available for the future.

RECOMMENDED: That

The land be retained by the Council, a basic design be commissioned and the plot sold via public auction with potential to develop.

***Referred to Cabinet**

The meeting ended at 8.56 pm