

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE, INNOVATION AND PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

Monday, 17th September, 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 M O Davis, Cllr S M King and Cllr F G Tombolis

Councillors O C Baldock, M A Coffin, N J Heslop, D Lettington, Mrs S L Luck and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs S Bell, D J Cure, Miss J L Sergison and A K Sullivan

PART 1 - PUBLIC

FIP 18/27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor O Baldock (member of Tonbridge Juddians RFC and vice-president of Tonbridge Lions which was supported by the applicant for hardship relief)

Councillor M Davis (vice-president of Tonbridge Juddians RFC and his firm represented K Sports Management Ltd)

FIP 18/28 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board held on 23 May 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

FIP 18/29 CLASS C EMPTY PROPERTY COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNT AND LONG TERM EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM

Further to Decision No D170059MEM, consideration was given to the report of the Director of Finance and Transformation as to whether there should be a change to the Class C empty property council tax discount and whether a 100% long term empty homes premium should be applied, both from 1 April 2019 where Regulations allowed.

It was noted that all but two Kent authorities had committed to reducing the Class C empty property discount to one month or less and details were given of the experience of those that had removed the discount completely. Members were minded to reduce the discount to zero but considered that it should be introduced for a trial period of one year with a report back on any implications.

Members considered increasing the premium on long term empty homes to 100% and the grant of delegated authority to implement it subject to the Regulations receiving the Royal Assent.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the Class C empty property discount be removed with effect from 1 April 2019 for a trial period of one year and a report back on any implications; and
- (2) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Finance and Transformation in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property to apply a long term empty homes premium of 100% from April 2019 if Regulations allow.
***Referred to Cabinet**

**FIP 18/30 THE 2019/20 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT
TECHNICAL CONSULTATION AND INVITATION TO PILOT 75%
BUSINESS RATES RETENTION IN 2019/20**

Decision Notice D180054MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation provided an overview of “The 2019-20 Local Government Finance Settlement Technical Consultation” and an “Invitation to Local Authorities in England to pilot 75% Business Rates Retention in 2019/20”, published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, together with a response to the Technical Consultation.

RECOMMENDED: That the response to the Technical Consultation (set out at Annex 1 to the report), as agreed with the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property and the Chairman of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board, be noted and endorsed.

FIP 18/31 FINANCIAL PLANNING AND CONTROL

Decision Notice D180055MEM

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 details of the variations agreed in relation to the revenue budget and areas identified through

budget monitoring, summarised to provide an indicative overall budget position for the year which showed a net adverse variance of £104,000. It was noted that this had arisen because better than budgeted performance had enabled a one-off contribution to the Building Repairs Reserve to fund a number of items of unbudgeted building repair works.

An update was given on capital expenditure and variations agreed in relation to the capital plan. The report also gave an update on the Savings and Transformation Strategy and funding gap and the proposed introduction by CIPFA of a financial resilience index.

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

FIP 18/32 APPLICATIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

Decision Notice D180056MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation gave details of renewal and new applications for discretionary rate relief which were considered in accordance with the previously agreed criteria for determining such applications. Further information was provided in relation to two applicants in accordance with Decision No D180029MEM (1). Consideration was also given to an application for hardship relief.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) in respect of the renewal applications discretionary rate relief be awarded as set out at Annex 2 to the report, in the case of the scout/guides groups indefinitely with effect from 1 April 2018; and the remainder with effect from 1 April 2018 and time limited to 31 March 2020 with Tonbridge Juddians RFC granted 100% relief and K Sports Management Limited 70% relief;
- (2) the new applications for discretionary rate relief be determined as follows:
 - Kent Archaeological Society, Room 20, The Manwaring Building, East Malling Research Station, New Road, East Malling – no discretionary relief be awarded
 - Housing & Care 21, Flat 4 Watercress Court, 98 Mill Street, East Malling - no discretionary relief be awarded;
 - Hospice in the Weald, 19 & 21 Swan Street, West Malling - no discretionary relief be awarded; and
- (3) the application for hardship relief in respect of The Green Barn Farmshop Limited, 2 The Pavilion, Tonbridge be refused.

FIP 18/33 RURAL RATE RELIEF - RURAL SETTLEMENT LIST

Decision Notice D180057MEM

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 be retained unaltered for the next financial year.

RECOMMENDED: That the current rural settlement list shown on the map at Annex 1 to the report remain in force for the year 2019/20.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

FIP 18/34 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 performance of the Benefits Service in recently published data for 2017/18 showed the combined performance to process new claims and changes in circumstances was best in Kent and among the top ten nationally, and they thanked staff for their hard work.

FIP 18/35 CAPITAL PLAN POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEWS MONITORING REPORT

The report identified the post implementation reviews carried out since the meeting of the Advisory Board in September 2017 together with the capital plan schemes for which reviews were due or outstanding. It was proposed to remove the Renewable Energy Schemes item from the list for review since the last payment in respect of the scheme had been made in 2008/09 and funds had been vired to other schemes.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

FIP 18/36 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 18/37 DEBTS FOR WRITE OFF

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

Decision Notice D180058MEM

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.

It was noted that in future debts over £5,000 would be reported for write off (in accordance with the revised Constitution).

RECOMMENDED: That the 10 items shown in the schedule of amounts over £1,000, totalling £15,250.74 be written-off for the reasons stated within the schedule.

FIP 18/38 PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF AMENITY LANE AT KEATS ROAD, LARKFIELD

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

The report of the Director of Central Services gave details of an application from a resident of Keats Road, Larkfield to purchase an area of amenity land adjacent to their property.

RECOMMENDED: That the area of amenity land at Keats Road, Larkfield be disposed of in line with the conditions set out in the report, subject to provision of further information regarding the valuation.

***Referred to Cabinet**

**FIP 18/39 PROPOSED LEASE AT SWANMEAD SPORTSGROUND,
TONBRIDGE**

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

The report of the Director of Central Services gave details of a proposed lease of land adjacent to Swanmead Sportsground Pavilion, Tonbridge to the Cricket Club for the siting of two storage containers.

RECOMMENDED: That a lease of land adjacent to Swanmead Sportsground Pavilion be approved in principle on the basis of the conditions outlined in the report, subject to clarification of details to the Cabinet meeting.

***Referred to Cabinet**

The meeting ended at 8.49 pm