

**TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**FINANCE, INNOVATION AND PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD**

**Wednesday, 14th May, 2014**

**Present:** Cllr H S Rogers (Chairman), Cllr R Taylor (Vice-Chairman), Cllr J Atkins, Cllr O C Baldock, Cllr T Bishop, Cllr P F Bolt, Cllr S R J Jessel and Cllr A K Sullivan

Councillors J A L Balcombe, M A C Balfour, M A Coffin, N J Heslop, Mrs S Murray and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D A S Davis, M O Davis and C P Smith

**PART 1 - PUBLIC**

**FIP 14/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**FIP 14/19 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board held on 8 January 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to correction of a typographical error in the attendance list to refer to 'Council Procedure Rule No 15.21'.

**MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**

**FIP 14/20 NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES - NEW BUILD EMPTY PROPERTY RELIEF AND REOCCUPATION RELIEF**

Decision Notice D14049MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation gave details of the Government's schemes for new-build empty property relief and reoccupation relief which were open for adoption by the Council. It was noted that the Government would reimburse local authorities in full for any relief granted under the schemes.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

(1) a scheme of new-build empty property relief be adopted as described in the guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (set out at Annex 1 to the report);

(2) a scheme of reoccupation relief be adopted as described in the guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (set out at Annex 2 to the report); and

(3) authority be delegated to the Director of Finance and Transformation to grant relief in accordance with the adopted schemes subject to any disputed entitlement to relief being referred to the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board.

#### **FIP 14/21 CORPORATE DEBT RECOVERY POLICY**

Decision Notice D140050MEM

Further to Decision No D120099MEM, the report of the Director of Finance and Transformation gave details of the outcome of the latest review of the Council's Corporate Debt Recovery Policy. Whilst no fundamental changes were necessary, a number of minor revisions had been made to reflect administrative changes.

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

#### **FIP 14/22 ADMINISTRATION OF BUSINESS RATES**

Decision Notice D140051MEM

Consideration was given to suggested responses to questions posed in the Government's consultation paper on the administration of business rates in England.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

The Director of Finance and Transformation be authorised to respond to the questions in the consultation paper on the basis outlined in the report subject to:

(1) rewording of the answers where no response is proposed to "we have no comment";

(2) amendment of the response to question 5 to suggest that the Government may wish to consider the valuation of public houses in the light of the number of closures occurring; and

(3) strengthening of the response to question 12 to reflect the challenges faced by businesses in understanding the complexities of the business rates system and inclusion of a preamble to the effect that the consultation does not address business concerns about the lack of

correlation between business rates and the services received from the local authority.

### **FIP 14/23 APPLICATIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF**

Decision Notice D140052MEM

Details were given of new applications for discretionary rate relief which were considered in accordance with the previously agreed criteria for determining such applications. The particular circumstances relating to the Charity Bank application were explained in as far as the loss of charitable status, as recognised by the Charity Commission, was caused by a technicality relating to the treatment of capital. However, the Bank's aims and objectives remained of a charitable nature.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the new applications for discretionary rate relief be determined as follows:

- (1) Roselands Pre-school, Higham School Road, Tonbridge – 20% discretionary relief be awarded time limited to 31 March 2015;
- (2) Healthy Planet Foundation, Unit 5, Burnt Ash Road, Quarry Wood Industrial Estate, Aylesford – no discretionary relief be awarded;
- (3) The Charity Bank Ltd, 194 High Street, Tonbridge – 80% discretionary relief be awarded time limited to 31 March 2015.

### **FIP 14/24 FINANCIAL PLANNING AND CONTROL**

Decision Notice D140053MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation provided information on the Council's key budget areas of salaries, major income streams, investment income and the trading position of the Leisure Services Business Unit. It also gave an update on the variations agreed in relation to the revenue budget, summarised to provide an indicative overall outturn position for 2013/14 which showed an updated net favourable variance of £225,000.

In addition details were given of variations identified through revenue budget monitoring in respect of 2014/15 together with an update on capital expenditure and variations agreed in relation to the capital plan.

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

## **MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**

### **FIP 14/25 E-BILLING UPDATE**

Members received a presentation updating progress with delivery of an option for council tax and business rates billing and account information to be available to customers via the Council's website. It was noted that the facilities would be available by signing up to 'My Account' and it was anticipated that the e-billing option would be available by the autumn.

### **FIP 14/26 FLOOD SUPPORT SCHEMES UPDATE**

The report gave an update on the four flood support schemes administered by the Council. It was noted that the processing of applications had been made as simple as possible and officers were commended for their positive approach to making available information to residents and businesses.

### **FIP 14/27 PUBLICATION OF ALLOWANCES PAID TO MEMBERS DURING THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2013/14**

The Advisory Board received a copy of the statement of the actual allowances paid to Members during the financial year 2013/14 which had been published in accordance with Regulation 15(3) of the Local Authorities (Members Allowance) (England) Regulations 2003.

### **FIP 14/28 BENEFITS UPDATE**

Members were advised of current issues arising in the benefits field including performance and workload of the Benefits Service and progress with various aspects of welfare reform.

### **FIP 14/29 COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES UPDATE**

The report gave details of recent developments in respect of council tax and business rates including collection rates.

### **FIP 14/30 FRAUD UPDATE**

The report gave details of work carried out by the Fraud Investigation Team during 2013/14, progress with the introduction of the Single Fraud Investigation Service and its potential impact on the Council. Members were advised that the Council would continue to require a level of investigation skills in the future and a further report would be presented on the level of provision, how it should be supplied and financed.

**MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**

**FIP 14/31 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 14/32 DEBTS FOR WRITE OFF  
(LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 2 – Information likely to reveal  
information about an individual)**

Decision Notice D140054MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation recommended 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 26 items shown in the schedule of amounts over £1,000, totalling £200,654.32 be written-off for the reasons stated within the schedule.

**FIP 14/33 PROPOSED TERMS OF NEW LEASE FOR STORAGE CONTAINER  
AT LEYBOURNE LAKES  
(LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of  
any particular person)**

Decision Notice D140055MEM

The report of the Director of Central Services gave details of proposed terms and conditions for a new lease of a container at Leybourne Lakes for use by a triathlon company.

**RECOMMENDED:** That a new lease be granted of the storage container under the terms and conditions detailed in the report.

**FIP 14/34 PROPOSED LEASE RENEWAL OF SHOP AT LODGE OAK LANE,  
TONBRIDGE  
(LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of  
any particular person)**

Decision Notice D140056MEM

Consideration was given to proposed terms and conditions for a lease renewal of shop premises at Lodge Oak Lane, Tonbridge.

**RECOMMENDED:** That a new lease be approved on the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

**FIP 14/35 LICENCE AGREEMENT WITH KENT COUNTY COUNCIL FOR  
PERMISSIVE FOOTPATH AT MEDWAY WHARF ROAD,  
TONBRIDGE  
(LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of  
any particular person)**

Decision Notice D140057MEM

The report of the Director of Central Services gave details of a licence agreement with Kent County Council for use of land owned by the Borough Council as a permissive footpath.

**RECOMMENDED:** That approval be given for a licence to Kent County Council for a permissive footpath at Medway Wharf Road, Tonbridge as identified in the report.

**FIP 14/36 PROPOSED RENT REVIEW CHANGE TO LEASE OF RIVER WALK  
OFFICES, TONBRIDGE  
(LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of  
any particular person)**

Decision Notice D140058MEM

Consideration was given to a proposed rent review for office premises at River Walk, Tonbridge.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the proposed new rental and delayed implementation date be approved as set out in the report.

**FIP 14/37 PROPOSED NEW TERMS FOR LEASE OF CAR PARK TO  
TONBRIDGE FARMERS MARKET  
(LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of  
any particular person)**

Decision Notice D140059MEM

The report of the Director of Central Services gave details of proposed terms for a new lease of Sovereign Way Mid Car Park, Tonbridge, for use by the Tonbridge Farmers' Market.

**RECOMMENDED:** That a new lease be granted on the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

**FIP 14/38 TRANSFER OF LAND AT TONBRIDGE SPORTSGROUND  
(LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of  
any particular person)**

Decision Notice D140060MEM

Consideration was given to the proposed transfer of a small area of land at Tonbridge Sportsground to UK Power Networks to expand the existing substation and undertake flood alleviation works.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the small area of land required by UK Power Networks be transferred to them on the basis detailed in the report.

The meeting ended at 8.52 pm