

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE, INNOVATION AND PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, 22nd July, 2020

Present: Cllr M C Base (Chairman), Cllr Miss G E Thomas (Vice-Chairman), Cllr T Bishop, Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr C Brown, Cllr R I B Cannon, Cllr A E Clark, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr K King, Cllr Mrs R F Lettington, Cllr H S Rogers, Cllr K B Tanner, Cllr Mrs M Tatton and Cllr C J Williams

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, Mrs P A Bates, Mrs S Bell, R P Betts, M D Boughton, V M C Branson, M A Coffin, N J Heslop, M A J Hood, S A Hudson, D Lettington, Mrs A S Oakley, W E Palmer, M R Rhodes and J L Sergison were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J L Botten

PART 1 - PUBLIC

FIP 20/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In the interests of transparency Councillors T Bishop and M Davis advised that they were the Council's appointees to the Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust to which reference was made in the report on Discretionary Rate Relief.

FIP 20/20 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board held on 8 January 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

FIP 20/21 APPLICATIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

Decision Notice D200048MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation gave details of renewal applications for discretionary rate relief for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2022. Details of three new applications were also set out. The Council's policy in respect of discretionary rate relief was attached at Annex 1 of the report.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) discretionary rate relief be awarded for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2022 in respect of the re-applications for relief as set out at Annex 2 to the report;
- (2) the application for discretionary rate relief received from Tree of Hope be refused;
- (3) the application for discretionary rate relief received from Samaritan's Purse International Limited be refused; and
- (4) the application for discretionary rate relief received from Refugease be refused.

FIP 20/22 FINANCIAL PLANNING CONTROL

Decision Notice D200049MEM

The report set out information on the three key budget areas of salaries, major operational income streams and investment income. Performance of the key budget areas, together with approved variations to the revenue budget and areas identified through revenue budget monitoring, were summarised to provide an indicative overall budget position for the year.

Details of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Borough Council's finances to the end of June and projected for the year 2020/21; the scale of the potential longer term impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Savings and Transformation Strategy and, in turn, savings and transformation contributions required to balance the budget, were also set out.

Finally, updates on capital expenditure and variations that had been agreed in relation to the capital plan were provided.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the likelihood that the Covid-19 pandemic would have a significant adverse impact on the Council's finances and reserve balances and as a result, in turn, on the scale and timing of the savings and transformation contributions required be noted;
- (2) the decision made by Cabinet to impose an 'essential spend only' policy for 2020/21 in order to preserve resources and to set a 'savings target' of £500,000 to be delivered as a result of this policy be noted;

- (3) the decision made by Cabinet that the general revenue reserve balance should not fall below £2m at any point during the MTFS 10-year period and to retain a minimum of £3m by the end of the period be noted;
- (4) the decision made by Cabinet in light of the difficult financial landscape that lays ahead to set a savings target of £100,000 to be delivered by April 2021 followed by a further £100,000 by April 2022 be noted;
- (5) the need to not only deliver any new targets, but to also deliver on the 'outstanding' decisions made prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and factored into the MTFS be noted;
- (6) the intention to bring a draft revision of the Savings and Transformation Strategy to Cabinet in the Autumn be noted; and
- (7) the financial challenge was such that financial sustainability was at increased risk be noted.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

FIP 20/23 DIGITAL STRATEGY UPDATE

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation reminded Members that the 'Digital Strategy 2019-23' was developed with a customer centric focus around the residents and businesses within the Borough, aligned to the Council's Corporate Strategy and based on improving the overall quality of life for residents allowing proactive and seamless engagement through the digital platform. Following completion of the first year of the four year strategy the report provided an update on progress made to date.

FIP 20/24 BUSINESS CONTINUITY INCIDENT - IT DISASTER RECOVERY

The report provided a record of the issues arising from the power outage on 5/6 April 2020 in respect of which a compensation claim against UK Power Networks had been lodged. In addition, the report provided a short summary of the issues arising from the failure of the air conditioning in the server room on 16 June 2020.

FIP 20/25 REVENUE AND BENEFITS UPDATE

The report provided details of recent developments in respect of council tax, business rates, council tax reduction and housing benefits.

FIP 20/26 BUSINESS GRANTS SCHEME

The report provided details of the Government schemes providing assistance to businesses and charities affected by the COVID-19 lockdown measures.

FIP 20/27 PUBLICATION OF ALLOWANCES PAID TO MEMBERS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2019-20

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation provided details of the Statement of Allowances paid in the financial year 2019/20 which had been published in accordance with regulation 15 (3) of the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

FIP 20/28 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 20/29 DEBTS FOR WRITE OFF

(LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 2 – Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual)

Decision Notice D200050MEM

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation sought approval for the writing-off of debts considered to be irrecoverable.

RECOMMENDED: That the 4 items shown in the schedule of amounts over £5,000, totalling £29,174.94, as set out in the report, be written off for the reason stated within the schedule.

FIP 20/30 PROPOSED NEW LEASE TO TONBRIDGE 1ST SCOUTS

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

Decision Notice D200051MEM

The report detailed a request received from Tonbridge 1st Scouts for a new lease of their scouting building at Lamberts Yard, Tonbridge.

RECOMMENDED: That the proposed new lease to Tonbridge 1st Scouts, as detailed within the report, be agreed.

FIP 20/31 PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF CAR PARK AT EAST PECKHAM

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

Decision Notice D200052MEM

The report detailed a request received from East Peckham Methodist Church to purchase the car park and associated land to allow for the redevelopment of a new Church and Community Hall, including public car parking.

RECOMMENDED: That, subject to clarification of the legal cost to the Borough Council, the proposed disposal to the Methodist Church, as detailed in the report, be agreed.

FIP 20/32 PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF LAND AT REAR OF NEW HYTHE LANE

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

Decision Notice D200053MEM

The report provided details of a request by three home owners to be allowed to purchase an area of land owned by the Borough Council to create an access to their rear gardens for the sole purpose of off road parking.

RECOMMENDED: That the proposed disposal of the area of land, as set out in the report, be agreed

**FIP 20/33 REQUEST FOR RENTAL REDUCTION - TWISDEN ROAD, EAST
MALLING**

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

Decision Notice D200054MEM

The report set out details of a request for a rental reduction in respect of
a retail unit.

RECOMMENDED: That no rent reduction be offered to the tenant.

The meeting ended at 10.07 pm