

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE, INNOVATION AND PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, 21st July, 2021

Present: Cllr R I B Cannon (Vice-Chairman - in the Chair), Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr A E Clark, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr M R Rhodes, Cllr H S Rogers, Cllr Mrs M Tatton and Cllr C J Williams

(Note: As Councillor F Tombolis was unable to attend in person and participated via MS Teams he was unable to vote on any matters)

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, R P Betts, M D Boughton, V M C Branson, M A Coffin, N J Heslop, M A J Hood, S A Hudson, D Keers, Mrs F A Kemp, D Lettington, B J Luker, Mrs A S Oakley and J L Sergison participated via MS Teams and joined the discussion when invited to do so by the Chairman in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M C Base (Chairman), T Bishop, C Brown, K King and Mrs C B Langridge

PART 1 - PUBLIC

FIP 21/32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor M Davis declared an Other Significant Interest in the item on Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief on the grounds that he was a Borough Council appointee to the Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust. In addition, he advised that his firm acted for one or two other organisations applying for rate relief. He withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the item and took no part in the discussion and voting thereon. Councillor M Tatton declared an Other Significant Interest in the same item in that she was a Trustee of the East Malling Centre. She took no part in the discussion or voting thereon in respect of the application relating to the East Malling Centre.

FIP 21/33 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board held on 19 May 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

FIP 21/34 DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

(Decision Notice D210075MEM)

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation gave details of renewal applications for discretionary rate relief for the period 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2023. Details of four applications for Rural Rate Relief were also set out. The Council's policies in respect of discretionary rate relief and rural rate relief were attached at Annexes 1 and 2 of the report.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) discretionary rate relief be awarded with effect from 1 July 2021 and time-limited to 31 March 2023 in respect of the re-applications for relief as set out at Annex 3 to the report;
- (2) discretionary rate relief be awarded with effect from 1 July 2021 and time-limited to 31 March 2023 in respect of the re-applications for rural rate relief as set out at Annex 4 to the report; and
- (3) the Malling District Scout Council, Scout Camp Site Comp Wood, Seven Mile Lane, Offham be awarded the maximum 20% 'top up' discretionary rate relief with effect from 1 July 2021 with no time limit.

FIP 21/35 FINANCIAL PLANNING AND CONTROL

(Decision Notice D210076MEM)

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation brought together information on three key budget areas, namely salaries, major operational income streams and investment income. The 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. The report also provided an update on capital expenditure and variations which had been agreed in relation to the capital plan.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) it be noted that, as at the end of June 2021, the projected overall outturn position for the year 2021/22 was a net favourable variance of circa £30,750 when compared to the budget set in February 2021;

- (2) the position in respect of the updated projected funding gap reported to Cabinet on 6 July 2021 of £1,775,000 and the need to identify and implement opportunities to deliver as a minimum this year's savings target of £100,000 be noted;
- (3) by 31st December 2021, or a date before, whichever is the earliest, concise information be supplied to all Members of the Council of the method(s) to achieve this year's required £100,000 saving (1st Tranche), or to report otherwise; and
- (4) the Council write to the two local Members of Parliament regarding the escalating cost of temporary accommodation and the need for additional Government support.

FIP 21/36 CUSTOMER SERVICES

The report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive invited the Board to consider proposals for the future opening hours and operation of Customer Services.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the customer services operation be moved from a drop-in reception service at both the Kings Hill and Castle reception points to a triaged pre booked appointment service;
- (2) the Kings Hill reception and call centre opening times be changed to 09:00 hours to 17:00 hours Monday to Thursday and 09:00 hours to 16:30 hours on Friday, to align with Tonbridge Castle which already operates these hours; and
- (3) the KPR self service kiosks be removed and the Council moves to a bar coded bill for those more vulnerable residents who are unable to pay through digital/phone methods.

***Referred to Cabinet**

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

FIP 21/37 DIGITAL STRATEGY UPDATE

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation provided an update on progress made with the delivery of the Digital Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the content of the report be noted.

FIP 21/38 IT INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation provided an update on progress made with the upgrade of the IT Infrastructure.

RESOLVED: That the content of the report be noted.

FIP 21/39 REVENUES AND BENEFITS UPDATE REPORT

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

RESOLVED: That the content of the report be noted.

FIP 21/40 BUSINESS GRANTS SCHEMES

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation provided details of Government schemes which had assisted businesses and charities affected by the COVID-19 lockdown.

RESOLVED: That the content of the report be noted.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

FIP 21/41 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 21/42 PROPOSED LETTING OF UNIT 29 MARTIN SQUARE, LARKFIELD

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

(Decision Notice D210077MEM)

The report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive provided details of the proposed lease for Unit 29, Martin Square, Aylesford.

RECOMMENDED: That the letting of the unit on the terms set out in the report be approved.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

FIP 21/43 DEBTS FOR WRITE OFF

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

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation provided details of debts that had been written off.

RESOLVED: That the content of the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm