

RESOURCES POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting - 13 January 2020

Present: B Gibbs (Chairman)
J Jordan and P Kelly

Apologies for absence: J Lowen-Cooper

Councillors not in S Chhokar and D Dhillon
attendance:

12. MINUTES

The minutes of the Resources PAG held on 24 September 2019 were approved. The PAG noted its disappointment in relation to the level of attendance by some members over the last year, and the lack of apologies offered for non-attendance of this meeting of the Resources PAG which had been arranged to discuss an important subject regarding debts incurred by the Council and the effect on the tax payer.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14. EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the following item(s) of business is not for publication to the press or public on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

15. FURTHER REPORT REGARDING WRITE OFFS 2018/2019

At its previous meeting on 24 September 2019, members of the Resources Policy Advisory Group requested further information in order to ascertain how successful the South Bucks Recovery Project had been and the expectations for the 2019/20 financial year.

There was an extensive and detailed discussion between the members and officers about both the amounts outstanding and the collection of both Council Tax and NDBR tax. The success of the recovery programme was highlighted including the fact that no additional costs in collecting arrears had been incurred because of the amalgamation of the SBDC and CDC service.

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It was noted that the Council's collection rates were above average when compared nationally to all District Councils and members were advised of the procedure followed by the Council to track debt and pursue collection. From April 2013, the Government replaced the national scheme of Council Tax benefit with new localised schemes for council tax support, but the terms of the new schemes meant that an amount of council tax had to be charged to everyone, including people on low incomes. As a result, collection was made more difficult from having to collect tax from those on the very lowest incomes. This had nationally affected collection and write off rates.

The PAG was advised of the total debt written off and the outstanding arrears currently being chased and how these had accumulated year on year. The Council collects all but 1.2% of council tax in year, and the amount of arrears since council tax started in 1993 was only 0.45% of the total amount collectible. Business rates were also discussed and it was noted that these were heavily clouded by the appeals process and what the valuation office deemed a business to be worth, changes are often backdated and this can all lead to more businesses declaring themselves bankrupt/entering liquidation.

The PAG noted its thanks to officers for the income collected via the recovery project and affirmed its hope that any restructuring done by the new Buckinghamshire Council would ensure the vast expertise staff in the District Councils had built up was not lost.

Following due consideration, it was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

The meeting terminated at 6.25 pm