

RESOURCES POLICY ADVISORY GROUP (SBDC)

Meeting - 14 March 2017

Present: Mr Egleton (Chairman)
Mr Chhokar, Mr Hogan and Mr Sangster

77. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

78. MINUTES

Apologies were noted for Councillor Chhokar for the Resources Policy Advisory Group (PAG) meeting 25 January 2017 and the minutes of the meeting were agreed.

79. SOUTH BUCKS DISTRICT COUNCIL ARREARS COLLECTION PROJECT

Items 3 and 10 (South Bucks District Council Arrears Collection Project - (Part II) Appendix 1) were discussed together. The Head of Customer Services updated the Group on the progress of the project to recover arrears of council tax, business rates and housing benefit overpayments. It was heard that the project derived from the Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils shared service review and was planned to commence June 2016, but due to software issues the project commenced in October 2016. There was a focus on housing benefit overpayments in which recovery action had generated an income of £36,000 to date and the outstanding debt had been reduced by £117,000, with further action to be taken. With regards to non-domestic rates, Members were informed that South Bucks District Council received 40% of the share of the projected amounts delivered, the government and preceptors benefitting from the balance. Certain cases requiring further recovery action had been referred to an enforcement agency on 14 March 2017. Six cases were recommended to Cabinet for write off as there was no prospect of recovery. In response to a question from Members concerning lessons learnt, it was heard that a review of housekeeping was needed and recovery action was to be taken at an earlier stage going forward, with all avenues of recovery exhausted, including charging orders. The PAG were pleased to note the progress made on arrear recovery.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **RESOLVED** that the progress of the South Bucks District Council Recovery Project be noted; and

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

to authorise the write off of specified non domestic rates with values over £10,000 where all previous recovery attempts have failed and there are no further routes of recovery as set out in the confidential appendix.

Councillor R Sangster entered the meeting at 6.35pm

80. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE QUARTER 3 2016/17**

The Director of Resources informed Members that the treasury management performance for quarter 3 2016/17 was largely unchanged from the previous quarter and that the variations related to changes in pre-set payments and direct debits. Members heard that the budgeted income target will not be met.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

81. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

82. **EXEMPT INFORMATION**

"That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 following item 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."

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

83. **APPLICATION FOR HARDSHIP RELIEF 1**

The Members of the PAG considered the application for rate relief attached as Appendix A.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **RESOLVED** that the application for rate relief be refused.

84. **APPLICATION FOR HARDSHIP RELIEF 2**

The Members of the PAG considered the application for rate relief attached as Appendix A.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **RESOLVED** that the application for rate relief be refused.

85. **VACATING CAPSWOOD 1**

The purpose of the report was to seek Member's views on vacating the remainder of Capswood1 and the possibility of sub-leasing the space as part of the overall strategy to make the best use of office accommodation. The Group discussed the content of the report in detail, as well as the need for the Council to reduce the cost of its operations. It was heard that there had already been interest in the space. Members felt that in order for timescales to be met, officers needed to be reactive and a fourth recommendation to Cabinet was to be added to reflect this.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

- (1) Capswood1 be vacated completely within 2017;**
- (2) to approve the expenditure of £20,000 to market the ground floor space, and the potential capital expenditure of £115,000 to decant and refurbish the ground floor of Capswood1;**
- (3) to delegate authority to the Head of Environment in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to negotiate a sub-lease for the ground floor of Capswood1 and to spend the £115,000 in point 2 above, subject to let being achieved; and**
- (4) to undertake the tender process for works and refurbishments as soon as practicable.**

The meeting terminated at 6.42 pm