CABINET

Thursday, 5 March 2015 (6:00 pm – 6:03 pm)

PRESENT:

Councillor House (Chair); Councillors Winstanley, A Broadhurst, Craig and Hamel

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Airey, Bloom and Sollitt

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RESOLVED ITEMS (SUBJECT TO QUESTIONS ONLY)

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CORPORATE FINANCIAL MONITORING 1 APRIL TO 31 DECEMBER 2014

Issue

To consider the Corporate Financial Monitoring and Budget Management report for the period 1 April – 31 December 2014 (Paper 4)

Considerations

The report presents the Council’s overall financial position for the period from 1 April 2014 to 31 December 2014. The forecast to the end of the financial year is a favourable variance of £145,714. The Community Investment Programme budget for 2014/15 is £7,299,593, of which £4,054,667 had been spent as at 31 December 2014 with the forecast being that all budgets will be spent by the year end. Budget Management proposals total £87,740. Commitment to approval is subject to the availability of resources once the final outturn position for 2014/15 is known.

An updated Risk Assessment (Appendix D) was tabled at the meeting.

RESOLVED -
That the General Fund Revenue position as at 31 December be noted;
That the Community Investment Programme as at 31 December 2014 be noted; and
That Budget Management items totalling £87,740, as detailed in Appendix C of the report, be approved subject to the availability of resources.

4. DISCRETIONARY REDUCTION IN LIABILITY POLICY

Issue
To consider a proposed Discretionary Reduction in Liability Policy (Paper 5)

Considerations
Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides the Council with additional discretionary powers to enable it to reduce the Council Tax liability where statutory discounts, exemptions and reductions do not apply or in such circumstances where the Council feels the level of discount, exemption or reductions is insufficient given the circumstances. The Council does not currently have a policy for dealing with applications for discretionary discount other than the policy for consideration of a discount under the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) which replaced Council Tax Benefit from April 2013. It is therefore appropriate to consider introducing a policy for this Council to ensure transparency of decision making and equality of service to our customers.

RESOLVED –
That the Discretionary Reduction in Liability Policy, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

5. BUSINESS RATE RELIEF

Issue
To consider the application of discretionary powers in respect of Transitional Relief awards, and related matters (Paper 6)

Considerations
There has been an extension of Transitional Relief for small and medium properties for a further two years, using the Councils discretionary powers, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act. Cabinet is asked to consider the implications and application of this, along with a number of related issues.
Additional information was tabled at the meeting to advise that the government has recently announced proposals to increase central funding for rate relief for retail premises with rateable value of less than £50,000 from £1000 in 2014/15 to £1500 for 2015/16.

As Members have previously agreed the policy for granting relief it is recommended that the proposed increase is incorporated into that policy from 1 April 2015 for 2015/16 only.

In addition, as the Head of Revenue & Benefits has delegated powers to award relief under S47 of the Local Government Act 1988, it is also recommended that any future changes or extension to discretionary relief, where fully funded by Central Government, be incorporated into our local policies without further requirement to report to Cabinet.

RESOLVED -

(1) That the Council uses its discretionary powers to continue to award Transitional Relief to those qualifying properties in line with the details given in paragraphs 4-15 of the report;

(2) That the Council does not use its discretionary powers to award relief to registered care providers as detailed in paragraphs 16-21 of the report, due to the cost that will be borne by residents of the borough;

(3) That the Council does not use its discretionary powers to award relief to providers of cash machines (ATMs) as detailed in paragraphs 23-28 of the report, due to the cost that will be borne by residents of the borough;

(4) That increasing the discretionary relief be given to retail premises with a rateable value of £50,000 from £1000 to £1500 for 2015/16; and

(5) That the Head of Revenue & Benefits includes any future changes or extensions to Discretionary Relief into current policies without the requirement to report to Cabinet.

6. WRITE OFF OF IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS

Issue

To consider the write off of irrecoverable debts in respect of Council Tax, NNDR and Housing Benefit Overpayments (Paper 7)

Considerations
The Head of Revenue & Benefits has exercised delegated powers to write-off certain debts and approval is sought for 4 debts over £2,000 to be written off.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the 550 written-off debts under £2,000 totalling £24,050.55 be noted;

(2) That the 89 written-off debts due to bankruptcy/liquidation totalling £197,080.52 be noted;

(3) That the 94 reversed or recovered debts totalling £729.66 be noted; and

(4) That approval be given to write-off 4 debts over £2,000, as detailed in the report, totalling £10,217.06.

7. FIRST AID RISK ASSESSMENT NEEDS - DEFIBRILLATORS

Issue

To consider defibrillator requirements in the Borough (Paper 8)

Considerations

The report suggests the purchase of five additional defibrillators to be located at Itchen Valley Country Park, Lakeside, Eastleigh House, The Berry and The Depot. The need is based on a suitable and sufficient first aid risk assessment whereby all influencing factors have been carefully considered by the Corporate Health & Safety Manager and Assistant Facilities Manager. The total cost of acquisition for five defibrillators and three outdoor security boxes is £9400. The total cost of installation for the three outdoor security boxes is £1600. The total running cost is £100 per year per defibrillator. All first aid staff at these sites will require suitable training in the use of the defibrillators if they have not done so already, and the Council’s first aid policy will require amending to reflect these changes.

It is noted that the Hedge End, West End and Botley Local Area Committee (HEWEB LAC) approved funding in March 2014 for public access defibrillators to be installed at five Parish & Town Council premises. Therefore it is recommended that the public access defibrillators acquired for Eastleigh Borough Council operational buildings and open spaces should be consistent with those purchased by HEWEB LAC.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the purchase of 2 Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and 3 Public Access Defibrillators (PADs) be approved,
to be located at or near the Council’s higher risk Operational Buildings; and

(2) That a one off sum of £11,000 be added to the Health and Safety Budget to allow for the purchase and installation of the defibrillators, and permanent growth of £500 per annum also be added to that Budget for ongoing operational/maintenance costs.