

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

24th April 2014

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Watson (Vice-Chairman in the Chair) and Councillors Jones, Hewlett (substitute for Councillor Wheeler), Roberts (substitute for Councillor Lemmon, smith, Stanton (substitute for Councillor Murray) and Watson.

Labour Group

Councillors Bell, Rhind, Richards, Southerd, Taylor and Wilkins.

In Attendance

Councillors Mrs. Plenderleith and Harrison (Conservative Group).

FM/109. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Lemmon, Murray and Wheeler(Conservative Group).

FM/110. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th February 2014 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

FM/111. **AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Minutes of the Audit sub-Committee held on 19th February 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED:-

That the Minutes of the Audit Sub-Committee Meeting held on 19th February 2014 be received and any recommendations contained therein are approved.

FM/112. **REFORMS OF DEBT RECOVERY PROCESSES**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services on national changes to debt recovery processes, which have been introduced recently. These are intended to place stronger controls on the operation of the bailiff and debt collection industry; and in particular, to prevent rogue operators from using unfair methods when collecting debts. The most important change has been the introduction of a so-called 'compliance stage' which allows non-enforcement activity, such as telephone calls and emails etc. before visits have to take place.

Members were reminded that the Council has a service level agreement with a bailiff company to carry out debt recovery on its behalf. They were informed that this company would give a presentation on its work to the Committee in June.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services was thanked for the report, which members felt explained well the changes that had taken place and their implications.

RESOLVED:

That the new rules and regulations governing the actions of bailiff's, including the collection of debts, be noted.

FM/113. **TEMPORARY DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services on the introduction of a temporary Business Rate Relief Scheme. The report explained that the Government had introduced three new temporary discretionary rate reliefs for businesses. These cover unoccupied newly built commercial premises, new occupants of property that had previously been vacant for over a year and rate relief for specified properties with a low rateable value.

The Committee was recommended to make use of the discretionary power and to introduce a rate relief scheme. This would, it was suggested, contribute towards the Council's key goal of promoting economic growth and regeneration. It would do this by helping existing businesses and by bringing currently unused properties back into use. Members welcomed the proposal and asked that information about the rate relief scheme be made known widely, so that as many businesses as possible could benefit from it.

RESOLVED:-

That the Council introduce a temporary Rate Relief Scheme in accordance with the Government's proposals.

FM/114. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received and endorsed its suggested updated work programme for 2014/15.

RESOLVED:-

That the updated work programme is approved.

Note: At the conclusion of this item and with the agreement of the Chairman, the Chief Executive, informed the Committee of the sad news that the former Chairman of the Council's Standards Committee, Dudley Williams, had died. The Committee rose and observed a silence as a mark of respect.

FM/115 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985)

RESOLVED:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

MINUTES

The Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th February 2014 were received.

DEBTS SUBMITTED FOR THE WRITE-OFF (Paragraph 1)

That the Committee approve the write-off of sums due to the Council in accordance with Financial Regulations

FRAUD UNIT (Paragraph 2)

That the Committee approve proposals for the changing role of the Council's Fraud Unit.

EXTENSION TO THE EXISTING CONTRACT FOR INSTALLING EXTERNAL WALL INSULATION (Paragraph 3)

That the Committee approve the existing contract for installing external wall insulation.

MRS. ANN WATSON

VICE-CHAIRMAN IN THE CHAIR