

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 7 JUNE 2016

Title:

OUTSTANDING DEBTS WRITE-OFF FOR DECISION

[Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ged Hall]

[Wards Affected: All]

Note pursuant to Section 100B(5) of the Local Government Act 1972

The annexe to this report refers to exempt information by virtue of which the public may be excluded during the item to which the report relates, as specified in Paragraph 3 of part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, namely:-

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

Summary and purpose:

The purpose of this report is to obtain approval for irrecoverable bad debts of more than a £7,500 individual value to be written off in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The efficient and professional management of outstanding debt ensures that the best possible collection rates are achieved at the lowest unit cost to Waverley. Such action falls within the Value for Money Corporate priority.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

Waverley treats all individuals consistently and fairly regardless of age, sex, gender, disability and sexual orientation and to ensure that individual's rights under data protection and human rights legislation is protected. The recommendations of this report are in line with these principles.

Resource and legal implications:

In accordance with recommended accounting practice, the Council maintains a provision for write offs in respect of council tax and sundry debt invoices. This provision meets with audit requirements and is subject to annual review. The write offs detailed in this report are within the normal annual allowance for such items therefore this report does not impact on Waverley's budgets. Business Rates are shared between the Government (50%), Surrey County Council (10%) and Waverley (40%). The yield lost in respect of council tax is allowed for when setting the council tax base and the impact is shared by all precepting authorities in proportion to their precepts.

Background

1. Waverley's Financial Regulations include a delegation to the Director of Finance and Resources to authorise the write off of any individual debt up to the value of £5,000 and, in conjunction with the Executive Director, any debt up to £7,500. Any debt over £7,500 must be referred to the Executive for approval before it is written off. In arriving at a decision to write off a debt, officers pursue a rigorous testing process to establish whether funds can be recovered or, as a last resort, whether the debt has to be deemed to be irrecoverable. Every effort is made to trace debtors and recover amounts but some debtors become insolvent and some debts become uneconomical to pursue further. Waverley makes a prudent provision within its accounts for bad debts which is based on the age profile and type of outstanding debts in each of the main income areas.
2. Write-offs were last reported to the Executive in December 2015. This report requests the Executive to approve the write-off of three Sundry Debts with a total value of £27,747.49 as detailed in the (Exempt) Annexe to this report. The reasons for write-off, together with the number of debts and the total values, are analysed as follows:
 - Uncollectable - One debt with a value of £7,939.01 where the debtor's last known address is HMP High Down.
 - Deceased - Two debts totalling £19,808.48 for overpaid benefit where the debtors are deceased and there are no monies left in the estates to clear the outstanding amounts. In one case solicitors are the executor to the estate and although the estate was insolvent a dividend has been received and the amount for write off is the net sum outstanding
3. In addition to these larger value debts the Director of Finance and Resources has also approved write-off of Council Tax debts and Sundry Debts in the <£5,000 bracket, totalling £21,934.71 (29 cases) and £46,275.97 (36 cases) respectively. These debts have been approved for write-off under the delegated authority. There has been no case approved for write off in the >£5,000 to £7,500 bracket since write offs were last reported to the Executive in December 2015.

Recommendation

It is recommended that, under Financial Regulation D203, the Executive approve the debts put forward for write-off as listed in the (Exempt) Annexe to this report.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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