

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

18 January 2012

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Hilary Thompson (Performance Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Joanne Machers, Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer
John Morton, Assistant Chief Finance Officer
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

31. Irrecoverable Debts – Sundry Debt Invoices *(Chief Finance Officer)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To seek the Portfolio Holder's approval to write-out a number of Sundry Invoices, which are now considered to be irrecoverable.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Council's financial procedure rules provide that any debt due to the Council of £1000 or more could only be written out with the express permission of the Portfolio Holder. Each year the Council issued sundry debtor invoices to the value of £23m and typically over 97% of debt was collected within 3 months. Whilst every effort was made to collect debts due to the Council, certain debts became irrecoverable. Approval for write-out was requested with the proviso that if any payment was eventually received the invoice would again be reinstated on the Integra Debtors system. Appendices attached to the report detailed the individual sundry invoices over £1,000 and the reasons why each invoice remained unrecovered. All debts had been comprehensively scrutinised by officers.

The Portfolio Holder asked for details of the level of sundry debts of less than £1,000 to which the Assistant Chief Finance Officer agreed to provide following the meeting.

Decision

That the write-out of irrecoverable Sundry Debtor Invoices be approved for the reasons set out in the report.

32. Irrecoverable Debts – Business Rates *(Chief Finance Officer)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To seek the Portfolio Holder's approval to write-out a number of business rates debts, which are now considered to be irrecoverable.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Council's financial procedure rules provide that any debt due to the Council of £1,000 or more could only be written out with the express permission of the Portfolio Holder. Each year the Council billed and collected business rates of around £27m on behalf of Central Government. Whilst every effort was made to collect these sums, certain debts became irrecoverable.

Appendices attached to the report detailed the individual business rates debts over £1,000 and the reasons why each debt remained unrecovered.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the future potential impact on the Council's budget as a result of recently announced proposals regarding future local business rates retention which would make collection of all future business rates more critical.

In response to a request for clarification, the Assistant Chief Finance Officer outlined the reasons for write-off of business rates in relation to various accounts. Whilst the Portfolio Holder was reluctant to agree to write-out of any debts, given the Council's current financial position, the Portfolio Holder acknowledged the Council's excellent performance in respect of debt recovery. The Portfolio Holder requested that debtors be reminded of the financial impact outstanding debts of this type would in future place on the Council's financial position.

Decision

That the write-out of irrecoverable business rate accounts be approved for the reasons detailed in the report.

33. Single Status Agreement Appeals *(Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To provide an update on progress on appeals received and obtain ratification of Appeals Panel outcomes in respect of High, Medium, Low and Very Low Priority Appeals.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report provided background information to the Appeals Procedure together with an update on progress of appeals received and requested ratification of Appeals Panel outcomes in respect of High., Medium, Low and Very Low Priority Appeals.

Details of outstanding appeals together with outcomes of appeals previously ratified were set out in the report.

The Portfolio Holder was referred to a schedule of Appeal Outcomes of individual appeals for ratification, attached as a confidential appendix to the report.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to note that all appeals had been considered within the agreed timetable, with the exception of 7, the reasons for which were acknowledged.

Decision

- (i) That progress to date be noted.
- (ii) That the Appeals Panel Outcomes in respect of Council Employees, as detailed in a confidential appendix to the report be ratified.

34. Statutory Workforce Equality Data Reporting Requirements (*Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer*)

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

To advise the Portfolio Holder of the arrangements being made to comply with statutory workforce equality data reporting requirements.

Issues for Consideration

The report provided background information to the Equality Act Regulations

2011 including the Council's arrangements to comply with statutory workforce equality data reporting requirements. The Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer referred to guidance issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) guidance on what it would expect to see evidence of, as set out in the report. The regulations stated that the Council had to publish relevant information not later than 31 January 2011 and every 12 months thereafter. Details of publication requirements for schools were provided, as detailed in the report. High Tunstall and English Martrys schools had been advised of the requirements to publish workforce data and arrangements were in place to support them in doing so.

The annual workforce profile report, reflecting the position as at 31 March each year had previously been submitted to the Portfolio Holder which included some of the information detailed in the guidance from EHRC. It was envisaged that this would be extended to include the statutory requirements, where data was available. As the guidance had only recently been received, the workforce data was currently being finalised. Arrangements were in place to publish the report on the Council's website before the statutory deadline of 31 January 2012. A copy of the published data would be submitted to the Portfolio Holder's meeting in February 2012 for information. Further update reports would be prepared to reflect the position as at 31 March 2012 and 31 March each year thereafter.

The Portfolio Holder queried whether schools were on target to meet the reporting requirements. The Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer advised that a range of workforce information was provided to schools and arrangements were in place to support schools in meeting the requirements.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the report.

35. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Minute 36 – Approval for Compulsory Redundancy (Paragraph 4 – namely information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under the authority).

36. Approval for Compulsory Redundancy *(Chief Customer and*

Workforce Services Officer)

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

To seek a decision regarding the future employment of employees who were affected by budget proposals under consideration for 2012/13. Employees in all three departments of the Council were affected and identified on a schedule attached as a confidential appendix.

Issues for Consideration.

The report set out the redundancy process which had been followed and the impact on specific posts and post holders. Further details were included in the exempt section of the minutes.

Decision

The decision was set out in the exempt section of the minutes.

The meeting concluded at 10.30 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 24 JANUARY 2012