

Agenda Item No:

Report To: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 30 January 2020

Report Title: Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule

Report Author & Job Title: Nic Stevens, Senior Recovery Officer, Revenues & Benefits

Portfolio Holder Cllr Neil Bell, Portfolio Holder for Finance & IT
Portfolio Holder for:



Summary: This report proposes the formal write off of £356,566.67. The proposals are in line with the Council's Revenues & Benefits Service Write Off Policy. Director of Finance & Economy has been consulted along with Heads of Service for relevant areas.

Key Decision: No

Significantly Affected Wards: None

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. Note the action that accounts totalling £57,761.81 have been written off under the delegated powers (Financial Regulations 11.1)
- II. Approve the write offs listed in the Exempt Appendices totalling £298,804.86

Policy Overview: The regular review and writing off of un-collectable debts is part of strong financial management.

Financial Implications: Provision for bad debts has been made in the final accounts to account for expected write-offs during the year.

Legal Implications None

Equalities Impact Assessment Not Required

Other Material Implications: None

Exempt from Publication: Yes (Appendices)

[Not For Publication by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.] and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information

**Background
Papers:
Contact:**

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Report Title: Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule

Introduction and Background

1. To advise Members of debts written-off and obtain approval to write off further individual debts of over £1,000.00 listed in the Exempt Appendices

Proposal/Current Position

2. The write offs being recommended are in accordance with the Revenues & Benefits Service Write Off Policy that was approved by the Executive Committee on 20 March 2003. Over recent years, due to the economic climate there has been a significant increase in NNDR (Business Rates) write offs, the majority of these relate to companies that have ceased trading.
3. Under delegated powers the Director of Finance & Economy has written off debts totalling £57,761.81 column (a). Approval is sought for write off of debts in column (b) totalling £298,804.86. The level of these write-offs is in line with previous write-off reports (for example, the last write-off report to Cabinet on 11 July 2019 showed comparable figures to those in this report), so this demonstrates that collection of debt remains rigorous.

Table1 – Write off debt summary

	Value of debts written off under delegated powers (a)	Value of debts recommended for write off (see attached appendices) (b)	Provision for Bad Debts at 1.4.19 (c)	Provision for Bad Debts Balance 11.7.19 (d)	Provision for Bad Debts Balance (Current) (e)	Value of outstanding Debt at 1.4.19 (f)
Council Tax	£46,239.52	£63,658.06	£810,005.00	£762,000.48	£652,102.90	£4,621,646.56
Business Rates (NNDR)	£4,558.76	£224,708.74 *	£336,167.00	£206,163.47	-£23,104.03	£1,246,572.88
Housing Benefit Overpayment	£3,530.99	£7,677.20	£988,238.00	£895,119.58	£883,911.39	£2,470,595.00
Sundry Debtors	£3,432.54	£2,760.86	£630,338.00	£620,332.68	£614,139.28	£584,056.52
TOTAL	£57,761.81	£298,804.86	£2,764,748.00	£2,483,616.21	£2,127,049.54	£8,922,870.96

- * it should be noted that over 50% of this figure relates to one account, that being a large retailer subject to a company voluntary agreement (CVA).

Implications and Risk Assessment

4. The write offs do not have an immediate financial effect on the current year's budget as the bad debt provision is greater than the write-off total. However, the making of that provision did have a cost implication at the time the provision was made; those being sundry debtors at full cost, council tax approximately 10% cost (90% financed by Kent County Council, Police and Crime Commissioner of Kent & Kent Fire Authority), housing benefit overpayments 60% cost due to existing subsidy arrangements and NNDR 40% (50% financed by the Government and 10% by Kent County Council). However, it should be noted that every year our collection rate of Council Tax and Business Rates is over 99%, so this demonstrates that there is significant success at debt collection, and that debt is only written off when absolutely necessary and the amounts written off remain a very small percentage of overall debt collection.

Conclusion

5. The Service's Write Off policy has been followed and in many cases a number of methods of recovery followed before the debts have been recommended for write off.

Portfolio Holder's Views

6. To be given at meeting

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