

Revenues Collection Performance and Write Offs

Report No:	CAB/WS/19/018	
Report to and date:	Cabinet	23 July 2019
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Key Decision: <i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that do not apply.)</i>	<i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>The decisions made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is not included on the Decisions Plan.</i>		

Wards impacted: **All wards**

Recommendation: **It is RECOMMENDED that the write-off of the amounts detailed in the Exempt Appendices to Report No: CAB/WS/19/018 be approved, as follows:**

- (1) Exempt Appendix 1: Council Tax totalling £6,812.30**
- (2) Exempt Appendix 2: Business Rates totalling £88,915.73**

1. Background / Context

- 1.1 The Revenues Section collects outstanding debts in accordance with either statutory guidelines or Council agreed procedures.
- 1.2 When all these procedures have been exhausted the outstanding debt is written off using the delegated authority of the Assistant Director, Resources and Performance for debts up to £4,999.99 or by Cabinet for debts over £5,000.00.
- 1.3 It is best practice to monitor the recovery procedures for outstanding debts regularly and, when appropriate, write off irrecoverable debts.
- 1.4 Provision for irrecoverable debts is included both in the Collection Fund and the General Fund and writing off debts that are known to be irrecoverable ensures that staff are focussed on achieving good collection levels in respect of the recoverable debt.

As at 30 June 2019 the percentage of debt written off during 2019/20 for all previous years is 0.014% (Council Tax) and 0.18% (NDR). No write offs have yet been made against debts for 2019/20.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 To review the current revenue collection performance and to consider writing off outstanding debts, as detailed in the Exempt Appendices 1 and 2.
- 2.2 Provision is made in the accounts for non-recovery, as set out in paragraph 1.4, but the total amounts to be written off are as follows **Council Tax £6,812.30 and Business Rates £88,915.73** with full details shown in Exempt Appendices 1 and 2.
- 2.3 As at 1 April 2019, the total National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) billed by Anglia Revenues Partnership on behalf of West Suffolk Council (as the billing Authority) is £76m per annum. The collection rate as at 1 July 2019 was 29.77% against a profiled target of 29.37%.
- 2.4 As at 1 April 2019, the total Council Tax billed by Anglia Revenues Partnership on behalf of West Suffolk Council (includes the County, Police and Parish precept elements) is £98m per annum. The collection rate as at 1 July 2019 was 28.94% against a profiled target of 29.52%.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 The Council currently uses the services of the ARP Enforcement Agency to assist in the collection of business rates and Council Tax and also has on line tracing facilities. It is not considered appropriate to pass the debts on to another agency.



- 3.2 It should be noted that in the event that a written-off debt becomes recoverable, the amount is written back on, and enforcement procedures are re-established. This might happen, for example, if someone has gone away with no trace, and then they are unexpectedly 'found' again, through whatever route.

4. Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1 Leadership Team and the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance have been consulted with on the proposed write-offs.

5. Risks and implications arising from the proposal

5.1 Financial

LOW risk - Debts are written off which could have been collected
Control - Extensive recovery procedures are in place to ensure that all possible mechanisms are exhausted before a debt is written off.

5.2 Legal Compliance

The recovery procedures followed have been previously agreed; writing off uncollectable debt allows staff to focus recovery action on debt which is recoverable.

5.3 Personal Data Processing

There are no changes to the way we process personal data.

5.4 Equalities

The application of predetermined recovery procedures ensures that everybody is treated consistently. All available remedies are used to recover the debt before write off is considered.

5.5 Other

No significant implications as a result of this report on crime and disorder; environmental or sustainability; HR / staffing; changes to existing policy; or impact on other organisations (e.g. community groups, businesses, partner organisations).

6. Appendices

Exempt Appendix 1: Council Tax

Exempt Appendix 2: Business Rates (NDR)

7. Background documents

None

