

# Revenues Collection Performance and Write Offs

<b>Report No:</b>	<b>CAB/WS/20/032</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>  <b>(Meeting cancelled due to COVID-19 outbreak. Item referred to Portfolio Holder for a decision)</b>	24 March 2020
	<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	31 March 2020
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<b>Lead officer:</b>	Rachael Mann Assistant Director (Resources and Performance) <b>Tel:</b> 01638 719245 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk">rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	

**Decisions Plan:** 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 was originally published as on the Decisions Plan as a Key Decision; however due to the total amounts now proposed to be written off, this is no longer the case.

**Wards impacted:** All wards

**Recommendation:** The write-off of the amounts detailed in the Exempt Appendices to Report No: CAB/WS/20/032, be approved, as follows:

- 1. Exempt Appendix 1: Business Rates totalling £65,255.58**
- 2. Exempt Appendix 2: Sundry Debt totalling £16,619.46**



## **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 or the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance 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 focused on achieving good collection levels in respect of the recoverable debt.

As at 29 February 2020 the percentage of debt written off during 2019/20 for all previous years is 2.13%. The percentage of write offs made during 2019/20 for 2019/20 is 0.02%.

## **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 but the total amounts to be written off are as follows 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 29 February 2020 was 94.97% against a profiled target of 94.72%.
- 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 29 February 2020 was 95.26% against a profiled target of 97.36%.
- 2.5 Between 1 April 2019 and 29 February 2020 the total Sundry Debtor invoices raised amounted to £29.3m. Based on the total payments received to date on these invoices the collection rate is 97.17%.

## **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 online



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. Failure to collect any debt impacts on either the levels of service provision or the levels of charges. All available remedies are used to recover the debt before write-off is considered. The provision of services by the Council applies to everyone in the area.

##### **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 – Business Rates  
Exempt Appendix 2 – Sundry Debt

#### **7. Background documents**

None



