

Thursday, 29 August 2024

Report of the Leader of the Council

Write Offs 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024

Exempt Information

None

Purpose

That Members endorse the amount of debt written off for the period 1st April 2024 to 30th June 2024.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet endorse the amount of debt written off for the period of 1st April 2024 to 30th June 2024 – **Appendix A-E** and approve the write off of irrecoverable debt for Housing Benefit Overpayments of £18,679.53 – **Appendix F** respectively.

Executive Summary

The Assistant Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for the regular review of debts and consider the need for write off and authorise where necessary appropriate write offs in line with the Corporate Credit Policy. This report shows the position for the first quarter of this financial year, to end June 2024. Further updates will continue to be produced on a quarterly basis.

Type	01/04/24 – 30/06/24 £ p
Council Tax	£6,694.52
Business Rates	£54,539.71
Sundry Income	£6,845.75
Housing Benefit Overpayments	£10,878.04
Housing	£48,370.94
Total	£127,328.96

Write offs for the first quarter in the previous financial year totalled £40,337.36. There is a significant increase on the corresponding quarter for the last financial year. The main reason for this is that resources were concentrated on trying to collect outstanding debt during 2023/24 following the impact of the cost of living crisis. In quarter 1 of 2024/25 the focus has been on working through large outstanding debts that are considered to be irrecoverable in respect of Business Rates and Housing. It should be noted that the amount of debt will differ each quarter based on conflicting demands and available staff resources.

Options Considered

Business Rates bad debt is calculated by reviewing all outstanding debts to ascertain whether they are likely to be collectable. This is then used to determine the balance to apply the usual aged debtor percentage.

Business Rates	01/04/24 – 30/06/24
	£ p
Bad Debt provision	(£851,513.15)
Amount written off to date under delegated powers	£54,539.71
Amount remaining	(£796,973.44)

The second part of the report is in respect of debts which are in excess of £10k.

Under Financial Regulations, debts for write-off greater than £10k require Cabinet authorisation and this report details such accounts. The amount for Housing Benefit Overpayments is attached in **Appendix F**.

Resource Implications

The write offs detailed are subject to approval in line with the Corporate Credit Policy/Financial Regulations and have been provided for under the bad debt provision calculation.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

Not applicable

Equalities Implications

Not applicable

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

Not applicable

Background Information

This forms part of the Council's Corporate Credit Policy and effective management of debt. The Council is committed to ensuring that debt write offs are kept to a minimum by taking all reasonable steps to collect monies due. There will be situations where the debt recovery process fails to recover some or all of the debt and will need to be considered for write off in accordance with the schemes of delegation prescribed in the Corporate Credit Policy.

The Council views such cases very much as exceptions. Before writing off debt, the Council will satisfy itself that all reasonable steps have been taken to collect it and that no further recovery action is possible or practicable. It will take into account the age, size and types of debt together with any factors that it feels are relevant to the individual case.

Debt Write Off

Authorisations are needed to write off debt:

Authority	Account Value
Executive Director/Assistant Director (or authorised delegated officer)	up to £5,000
Executive Director Finance	£5,001 - £10,000
Cabinet	over £10,000

Bad Debt Provision

The level of the provision must be reviewed jointly by the unit and Accountancy on at least a quarterly basis as part of the management performance review, and the table below gives the mandatory calculation. Where the debt is less than 6 months old it will be written back to the service unit.

Debt Outstanding Period	Debt Outstanding Provision (net of VAT) %
Between 6 and 12 months old	50%
Between 12 and 24 months old	75%
Over 24 months old	100%

The financial effects of providing for Bad Debts will be reflected in the Council’s accounts at Service Unit level.

Report Author

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List of Background Papers

Corporate Credit Policy - effective management of debt

Appendices

Appendices A to E give details of write offs completed for Revenues and Benefits Services and Housing for 01 April 2024 to 30 June 2024.

Appendix F gives details of Housing Benefit Overpayments write offs for approval.

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