

PART A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 18th January 2016

Report of: Director of Finance

Title: Irrecoverable Write Offs for Housing Benefit Overpayments and Sundry Debtors

1.0 **SUMMARY**

1.1 The purpose of this report is for Members to consider agreeing to write-off individual debts of £3,000.00 or more. The council seeks to recover all the debt it is owed by residents.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That Members approve writing off 5 accounts; 1 for Sundry Debts and 4 for Housing Benefit Overpayments, covering the period 2010 though to 2014, amounting to £18,211.94 listed in the table below.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact:
Nick Smith, Revenues Manager (Telephone Ext 8134)

Report approved by: Robert Della-Sala, Head of Revenues & Benefits
Joanne Wagstaffe, Director of Finance

3.0 **DETAILED PROPOSAL**

3.1 The Director of Finance has the power to approve the write off of irrecoverable debts up to an approved limit. The approved limit is £3,001 for council tax, business rate, housing benefit overpayment and sundry debt.

3.2 Where an irrecoverable debt requiring write off is in excess of the approved limit, and the debt can still legally be recovered, the approval of Cabinet is required.

3.3 Revenues and Benefits Services have a policy and procedure document for writing off debts (for all funds) as approved by Council on the 13 June 2011. All write offs are implemented in accordance with this document.

- 3.4 The writing off of irrecoverable monies owed to the Council in respect of all debts should be done on a regular basis, as cases arise. This is so that efforts can be focused on debts that are more likely to be recovered. There are a variety of recovery methods that the council can rely on to secure debts and in each case listed, all recovery methods have been attempted.
- 3.5 Reminders have been issued, summonses have been obtained and debts passed to bailiffs and a specialist tracing agent. In all the proposed write offs, the individuals cannot be traced.
- 3.6 The tables below relates to outstanding debts by each year.

Debt Type	Year	No of accounts	Total for write off	Average debt per case
Sundry Debt	2013/14	1	£3,008.00	£3,008.00
	TOTALS	1	£3,008.00	£3,008.00

Debt Type	Year	No of accounts	Total for write off	Average debt per case
Housing Benefit Overpayments	2010/11	1	£3,540.54	£3,540.54
	2011/12	1	£4,332.12	£4,332.12
	2012/13	2	£7,331.28	£3,665.64
	TOTALS	4	£15,203.94	£3800.99

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS.**

4.1 **Financial**

- 4.1.1 Provision for bad debts has already been made in the councils' bad debt provision.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.2.1 In the event that the individual subsequently comes to the attention of the Council the debt could still be reactivated and action to recover taken.

4.3 **Equalities**

- 4.3.1 None identified

4.4 **Potential Risks**

- 4.4.1 None identified

4.5 **Staffing**

- 4.5.1 None identified

4.6 **Accommodation**

4.6.1 None identified

4.7 **Community Safety**

4.7.1 None identified

4.8 **Sustainability**

4.8.1 None identified

Appendices

Appendix A Watford Borough Council proposed write-offs – PART B

Background Papers

None.

File reference:

Head of Revenues and Benefits Services records