

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	15 th September 2025
Subject:	Approval to write-off individual property related debts greater than £15,000
Lead Member:	Cllr Chahal, Finance, Assets & Transformation
Chief Officer:	Chris Holme, Interim Executive Director Finance and Commercial (S151)
Contact Officer:	Andy Jeffs, Director of Revenues and Welfare Services
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	NO
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject To Call In:	YES
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – List of Debt to be Written Off

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to write-off individual uncollectable commercial rent debts that exceed £15,000. The aggregate total value of these debts is £170,147.61.
- 1.2 Given the high volume and value of invoices and bills issued by the Council there will always be a requirement to write-off an element of debt as uncollectable. The Council has taken all reasonable steps and appointed third parties to obtain monies owed.
- 1.3 All cases requested for write-off follow a rigorous process in an attempt to recover the outstanding money, sometimes dating back many years. Only after all avenues have been exhausted will the Council consider writing off debt. Once debts have been identified as uncollectable this then requires Cabinet approval for write-off a request for this is made in a timely manner.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to authorise the write-off of those debts identified in Appendix 1.

Reason:

Financial Procedure rules require Cabinet to approve any individual debt write-off greater than £15,000.

Commissioner Review

This report is outside the scope for pre-publication commissioner review; please check the [Commissioners' instruction 5 to CLT to sign off papers](#) for further details.

2. Report

Introduction

- 2.1 The Council is responsible for the collection of rent on commercial buildings that are let out to third parties to provide a revenue income stream to the Council. This report sets out the debts that require write-off.
- 2.2 Property officers have been working closely with the Revenues team to recover outstanding debt over the last 5 years. In many instances, this has proved successful, however in some cases we have not been able to collect the rent due to reasons such as liquidation, tenant absconding or lack of details.

Background

- 2.3 In accordance with good financial management principles, the Council makes appropriate bad debt provision for all revenue streams. This provision recognises that a proportion of the Authority's debts will prove irrecoverable and ensures that the value of debtors within the Authority's accounts is a fair reflection of the amount that will eventually be recovered.
- 2.4 All debts, taxes and rates within the service's control are actively pursued, and in most instances are collected with little difficulty. In cases where payment is not received on time, a reminder will be issued promptly to the debtor. If this fails to secure payment, a final reminder and/or a summons will also be issued and if necessary, the debt passed to an appropriate collection agent such as Enforcement Agents or HB Public Law to secure payment.
- 2.5 Sometimes, however, if a debtor is having difficulty making the payment, special arrangements are used to effect recovery, and this may mean extending the period to collect the debt.
- 2.6 In some cases, pursuit of an outstanding debt is not possible for a variety of reasons, such as bankruptcy, liquidation, or tenant absconding. Such cases under £1,000 can be written off by the Director of Revenues and Welfare Services, or between £1,000 and £15,000 the Executive Director Commercial Resources (S151) under delegated authority. Cases where the debt exceeds £15,000 must, however, be approved by Cabinet prior to the debt being written off.
- 2.7 A record is kept of debts written off, together for the reason for doing so, so that if there is a realistic chance of recovery in the future a debt may be written back on and pursued again.

Rent

- 2.8 Since 2019, there are 7 debts totalling £170,147.61 that need approval from Cabinet to write-off.

- 2.9 In all cases both the property department and revenues finance team have exhaustively tried to recover as much money as possible, in most instances using third party debt recovery agencies.

In most cases, the tenants are either corporations that are no longer trading or officers have been unable to track down the listed tenants. Appendix 1 lists the debts that are recommended for write off.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

- 3.1.1 In accordance with good financial management principles, the Council makes appropriate bad debt provision for all revenue streams. This provision recognises that a proportion of the Authority's debts will prove irrecoverable and ensures that the value of debtors within the Authority's accounts is a fair reflection of the amount that will eventually be recovered.
- 3.1.2 The writing off of any debt must only be considered after all reasonable efforts have been made to recover, and there is a justifiable reason why it cannot be pursued further. Debt write-off does not preclude future claims against those in default should circumstances warrant.

3.2 Legal implications

- 3.2.1 The Council has a debt management policy. The policy covers the need to write off debts when they are deemed uncollectable. Rent collection is governed by leases and other land documents, however sometimes the tenant may have left with outstanding arrears, or the corporate entity dissolved. Collection of former tenancy/leasehold arrears can be successful, but this depends on the nature of the entity. In some limited circumstances, a debt may be written off as uncollectable, but a debtor may be in a position to pay the debt in the future. This is more likely where a court judgment has been entered and a debtor wants to satisfy this in the future. The council can still receive payment for debt even when it has been written off.

3.3 Risk management implications

- 3.3.1 There are no specific issues arising directly from this report. It is important that the Council regularly reviews its debts and make appropriate write off decisions to ensure there is clarity on the level of bad debt provision and that enforcement action and collection rates are regularly benchmarked and reviewed.

3.4 Environmental implications

- 3.4.1 There are no direct environmental impacts anticipated from the recommendations contained within this report.

3.5 Equality implications

- 3.5.1 There are no equality implications arising directly from this report. The Council's various enforcement policies consider the impact of debt of specific groups and individual circumstances will be taken into account when agreeing payment arrangements.

3.6 Procurement implications

3.6.1 There are no procurement implications arising directly from this report.

3.7 Workforce implications

3.7.1 There are no workforce implications arising directly from this report.

3.8 Property implications

3.8.1 There are no property implications arising directly from this report.

4. Background Papers

None.

Appendix 1 – List of Debt to be Written Off

Arrears over £15k from 2019 onwards

73166	Kids Clothing Limited	commercial rent and service charge arrears	£15,500.04	Tenant absconded. Attempted enforcement through agents but no success. Arrears period September 2021 to March 2025
67485	Mr Mohamed Thasim	commercial rent and service charge arrears	£20,915.03	Unit taken back. Attempted enforcement but no success. Arrears period March 2020 to August 2022
72598	Mrs Shahana Azeez	commercial rent and service charge arrears	£22,266.04	Tenant absconded. Attempted enforcement through agents but no success. Arrears period April 2020 to July 2022
70239	Mr Bob Steenson	commercial rent and service charge arrears	£28,469.50	Tenant absconded. Attempted enforcement through agents but no success. Arrears period January 2022 to February 2024
72489	Mr Afzaal Shaikh	commercial rent and service charge arrears	£30,395.57	Tenant absconded. Attempted enforcement through agents but no success. Arrear period March 2021-April 2024
58615	Shelina Khanom	commercial rent arrears	£39,767.06	Tenant absconded. Attempted enforcement through agents but no success. Arrears period October 2019 to July 2022
76342	Millionnaire Group	commercial rent and service charge arrears	£12,834.37	We have instructed repossession of these units. We have attempted payment plans many times with no success. Arrears period Oct 2024-March 2025
			£170,147.61	