

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date: **26 January 2021**

By: **Interim Chief Operating Officer**

Title of report: **Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2021/22**

Purpose of report: **This report proposes the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy for 2021/22. The Council is also required to set Prudential Indicators as set out in the Prudential Code which are included in this strategy for approval.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to recommend Council to:

- 1) approve the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy Statement for 2021/22;**
 - 2) approve the Annual Investment Strategy for 2021/22;**
 - 3) approve the Prudential and Treasury Indicators 2021/22 to 2023/24;**
 - 4) approve the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement 2021/22 at Appendix A (Section 3).**
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1. Background

1.1 A requirement under the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services is to prepare a Treasury Management Policy and Strategy setting out the Council's policies for managing investments and borrowing.

1.2 The Local Government Act 2003 and supporting regulations requires the Council to 'have regard to' the Prudential Code and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years to ensure that the Council's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

1.3 The Treasury Management Policy and Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2021/22 is presented in **Appendix 'A'** to this report. The strategy includes the Treasury Management Policy Statement, the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, the Annual Investment Strategy, Prudential and Treasury Indicators for the next three years and the annual Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement.

1.4 The 2021/22 TMSS has been prepared within the context the financial challenge being faced by the County Council over the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The 2021/22 TMSS seeks to complement the Council's Core Offer by:

- utilising long term cash balances as effectively as possible by investing in longer term instruments and/or using to fund borrowing to reduce borrowing costs;
- ensuring the investment portfolio is working hard to maximise income by further use of alternative appropriate investment opportunities during 2021/22;
- ensuring effective management of the borrowing portfolio by exploring rescheduling opportunities and identifying and exploiting the most cost effective ways of funding the Council's borrowing requirement.

Investment Strategy

1.5 The 2021/22 Investment Strategy has been set in the context of diminishing returns and opportunities in the current economic environment. The average rate of return for 2019/20 was 1.08% and for the first six months of 2020/21 was 0.84%.

1.6 The Investment Strategy provides the framework for officers to seek new opportunities to invest long-term cash in suitable longer term instruments in order to assist in delivering treasury efficiencies by securing a level of investment income. The pandemic, and resultant market uncertainty, is limiting the scope for new investments. Actions to explore the available options for Short Dated Bond Funds and Multi Asset Funds have been paused but will be explored in the future when appropriate.

1.7 In the current climate, investments to other Local Authorities could secure an enhanced fixed level of return over traditional bank deposits with an increased level of credit security.

1.8 In response to the Council declaring a Climate Emergency, the Annual Investment Strategy for 2020/21 included Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) as a factor when undertaking investment decisions to allow the Treasury Management Strategy to actively support the Council's aspirations to tackle climate change and other ESG factors. Officers have been exploring how the Council's current counterparties are contributing to this area and are being asked how investment solutions can compliment this strategy. In reality, the market for green and ESG investments is relatively immature, which reduces the ability to actively invest in products that support the Council's aspirations. However, research and the consideration of suitability of ESG investment products will continue into 2021/22.

Borrowing Strategy

1.9 The Borrowing Strategy and the Capital Programme identifies a borrowing need of £71m over the next 3 years (between 2021/22 and 2023/24). The Council currently has large cash balances, therefore officers will seek to use cash from the Council's own reserves to initially fund borrowing. This will decrease the Council's cash balances, reducing counterparty risk, and reduce borrowing costs. Modelling of the Council's capital plans and cashflows has identified an appropriate level of internal borrowing of around £50m. This strategy will be kept under constant review by officers, and borrowing will be undertaken where it is felt there is a significant risk of steep increases in borrowing rates.

1.10 On the 25 November 2020 the Government announced the conclusion to the review of margins over gilt yields for Public Works Loan Board (PWL) rates; the standard and certainty margins were reduced by 1% but a prohibition was introduced to deny access to PWLB borrowing for any local authority which intended to purchase of assets primarily for yield (i.e. commercial assets) in its three year capital programme. This reduction in future borrowing costs has been factored into the Treasury Management tool to support the development of Capital Strategy to 2040/41.

1.11 The budget within the MTFP is calculated using the Treasury Management Tool that reflects the costs of borrowing in support of the targeted basic need programme offset by returns on investment of the Council's balances. It is therefore reflective of a point in time. The treasury management tool, developed as part of the Capital Strategy, is reviewed regularly for reasonableness.

Revenue impact

1.12 The MTFP includes £0.7m increase in the Treasury Management budget over the next two years to reflect the increase in MRP due to a change in profiling methodology. This is a planned change which resulted from the approval of moving to an annuity method of calculation. In addition, £1.0m has been added in 2022/23 and a further £1m in 2023/24 to reflect the net revenue impact of the Capital Strategy and Programme in terms of the cost of borrowing and the setting aside of MRP.

2. Supporting Information

Treasury Management Reporting

2.1 As well as this annual strategy, the CIPFA Code requires the Council reports as a minimum:

- A mid-year review;
- An annual report at the close of the year.

2.2 This Council meets this requirement with the Treasury Management Annual Report 2019/20 and mid-year report 2020/21 presented to Cabinet on 08 December 2020. Additionally, a treasury management monitoring position is reported to Cabinet four times a year.

Economic Background

2.3 The Council takes advice from Link Asset Services on its treasury management activities. A detailed view of the current economic situation and forecasts, as prepared by Link Asset Services is included in **Appendix A (Annex B)** to this report.

3. Conclusion and recommendations

3.1 This policy sets out the acceptable limits on ratings, investment periods, amounts to be invested and the borrowing strategy. Cabinet will be aware that the financial position is kept under constant review and if at any time it is felt that any of these limits represent an unacceptable risk appropriate and immediate action will be taken accordingly.

3.2 Cabinet recommends the 2021/22 Treasury Management Policy and Strategy Statement for approval by Council.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

CIPFA Prudential Code and CIPFA Treasury Management Code

Local Government Act 2003 – Capital Finance

MHCLG Statutory Guidance on Local Authority Investments and the Minimum Revenue Provision.

Appendix A

TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY 2021/22



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's risk appetite, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.

The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans or using longer-term cash flow surpluses. On occasion, when it is prudent and economic, any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.

The contribution the treasury management function makes to the authority is critical, as the balance of debt and investment operations ensure liquidity or the ability to meet spending commitments as they fall due, either on day-to-day revenue or for larger capital projects. The treasury operations will see a balance of the interest costs of debt and the investment income arising from cash deposits affecting the available budget. Since cash balances generally result from reserves and balances, it is paramount to ensure adequate security of the sums invested, as a loss of principal will in effect result in a loss to the General Fund Balance.

CIPFA defines treasury management as:

“The management of the local authority's borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.”

1.2 Reporting Requirements

1.2.1 Capital Strategy

The CIPFA 2017 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes require all local authorities to prepare a capital strategy report, to provide the following:

- a high-level long term overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services
- an overview of how the associated risk is managed
- the implications for future financial sustainability

The aim of the capital strategy is to ensure that all elected members on the full Council fully understand the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.

This capital strategy is reported separately from the Treasury Management Strategy Statement; non-treasury investments will be reported through the former. This ensures the separation of the core treasury function under security, liquidity and yield principles, and the policy and commercialism investments usually driven by expenditure on an asset.

1.2.2 Treasury Management reporting

The Council is currently required to receive and approve, as a minimum, three main treasury reports each year, which incorporate a variety of policies, estimates and actuals.

- a. Prudential and treasury indicators and treasury strategy** (this report) - The first, and most important report is forward looking and covers:
- the capital plans, (including prudential indicators);
 - a minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy, (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time);
 - the treasury management strategy, (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised), including treasury indicators; and
 - an investment strategy, (the parameters on how investments are to be managed).
- b. A mid-year treasury management report** – This is primarily a progress report and will update members on the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and whether any policies require revision.
- c. An annual treasury report** – This is a backward looking review document and provides details of a selection of actual prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operations compared to the estimates within the strategy.

This Council delegates responsibility for implementation and monitoring treasury management to Cabinet and responsibility for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions to the Section 151 Officer. Cabinet therefore receives the Mid Year and Annual treasury reports in December each year.

The above reports are required to be adequately scrutinised before being recommended to the Council. This role is undertaken by the Audit Committee.

1.3 Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22

The strategy for 2021/22 covers two main areas:

Capital issues

- the capital expenditure plans (section 2) and the associated prudential indicators (Annex C);
- the minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy (Section 3).

Treasury management issues

- the current treasury position (section 1.5);
- treasury indicators which limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council (Annex C);
- prospects for interest rates (Annex B);
- the borrowing strategy (section 2);
- policy on borrowing in advance of need (section 2.2);
- debt rescheduling (section 2.3);
- the investment strategy (section 4);
- creditworthiness policy (section 4.4); and
- the policy on use of external service provider (section 5.3).

These elements cover the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, the CIPFA Prudential Code, MHCLG MRP Guidance, the CIPFA Treasury Management Code and MHCLG Investment Guidance.

1.4 Treasury Management Policy Statement

The policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management activities are as follows:

- i) This Council defines its treasury management activities as:

'The management of the authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks'.

- ii) This Council regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for the Council, and any financial instruments entered into to manage these risks.
- iii) This Council acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable comprehensive performance management techniques, within the context of effective risk management.

1.5 Current Treasury Position

A summary of the Council's borrowing & investment portfolios as at 30th November 2020 and forecast at the end of the financial year is shown in **Table 1** below:

Table 1	Actual at 30 November 2020			Forecast to 31 March 2021		
	£'000	% of portfolio	Average Rate	£'000	% of portfolio	Average Rate
Investments						
Banks	125,000	46%	0.45%	140,000	58%	0.30%
Local Authorities	59,000	22%	1.24%	64,000	27%	1.21%
Money Market Funds	84,000	30%	0.39%	31,000	13%	0.10%
CCLA Pooled Property Fund	5,000	2%	3.75%	5,000	2%	3.75%
Total Investments	273,000	100%	0.63%	240,000	100%	0.50%
Borrowing						
PWLB loans	225,000	95%	4.70%	223,700	95%	4.70%
Market loans	12,900	5%	4.00%	12,900	5%	4.00%
Total external Borrowing	237,900	100%	4.67%	236,600	100%	4.67%

2. BORROWING STRATEGY

The capital expenditure plans of the Council are set out in the Capital Strategy Report being considered by Full Council on 9 February 2021. The treasury management function ensures that the Council's cash is organised in accordance with the relevant professional codes so that sufficient cash is available to meet the capital expenditure plans.

Any capital investment that is not funded from these new and/or existing resources (e.g. capital grants, receipts from asset sales, revenue contributions or earmarked reserves) increases the Council's need to borrow. However, external borrowing does not have to take place immediately to finance its related capital expenditure: the Council can utilise cash being held for other purposes (such as earmarked reserves and working capital balances) to temporarily defer the need for external borrowing. This is known as 'internal borrowing'.

The Council's primary objective is to strike an appropriate balance between securing cost certainty, securing low interest rates. The Council's cumulative need to borrow is known as the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR and the actual level of external borrowing will differ according to decisions made to react to expected changes in interest rates and the prevailing economic environment. Where a decision to defer borrowing (or internally borrow) is made, the Council will be underborrowed. Where a decision to borrow in advance of need to secure cost certainty, the Council will be overborrowed.

On 25 November 2020 the Chancellor announced the conclusion to the review of margins over gilt yields for PWLB rates; the standard and certainty margins were reduced by 1% but a prohibition was introduced to deny access to PWLB borrowing for any local authority which intended to purchase assets primarily for yield in its three year capital programme. The reduction in future borrowing costs will be factored into the funding of the capital programme which contains no such assets for yield purchases.

While this authority will not be able to avoid borrowing to finance new capital expenditure, to replace maturing debt and the rundown of reserves, there will be a cost of carry, (the difference between higher borrowing costs and lower investment returns), to any new borrowing that causes a temporary increase in cash balances as this position will, most likely, incur a revenue cost.

There is £21m expected to be funded via borrowing in the 2020/21 Capital Programme. No new external borrowing is expected to be undertaken to fund this, and this will be funded through cash balances. This is expected to increase the Council's under-borrowed position compared to its CFR from £22m at 31 March 2020 to £39m by 31 March 2021.

2.1 **Borrowing Strategy for 2021/22**

The Council's Capital Programme 2021/22 to 2023/24 forecasts £211m of capital investment over the next three years with £140m met from existing or new resources. The increase in the Council's borrowing need over this period is therefore £71m as shown in **Table 2** below.

2020/21 Projected	Table 2	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate	Total
£m		£m	£m	£m	£m
79	Capital Expenditure	92	66	53	211
(58)	Financed by: New & existing resources	(60)	(41)	(39)	(140)
21	Borrowing Need	32	25	14	71

Table 3 below shows the actual expected external borrowing against the capital financing requirement, identifying any under or over borrowing.

2020/21	Table 3	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
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Estimate £m		Estimate £m	Estimate £m	Estimate £m
239 (3)	External Debt at 1 April Expected change in Debt	237 13	250 16	266 5
236	External Debt at 31 March	250	266	271
261 21 (7)	CFR* at 1 April Borrowing need (Table 2) MRP	275 32 (8)	299 25 (9)	315 14 (9)
275	CFR* at 31 March	299	315	320
39	Under / (Over) borrowing	49	49	49

*CFR in Table 3 is the underlying need to borrow and excludes PFI and lease arrangements, which are included in the CFR figure in the Prudential Indicators in Annex C

Table 2 demonstrates that the Council has a borrowing need of £71m over the next three years. The strategy will initially focus on meeting this borrowing need from internal borrowing; avoiding external borrowing by utilising the Council's own surplus funds. Modelling of the movement of reserves and the Council's capital expenditure plans demonstrates that the Council's long term reserves can support a level of approximately £50m of internal borrowing. This will mitigate the increase in the cost of borrowing and reduce counterparty risk within the Council's investment portfolio by reducing the portfolio size.

However, borrowing rates from the PWLB were reduced by HM treasury by 1% in November. There will remain a cost of carry (the difference between borrowing costs and investment rates) to any new long term borrowing that causes a temporary increase in cash balances which will, most likely, lead to a cost to revenue.

Therefore, the internal borrowing position needs to be carefully and continually reviewed to avoid incurring higher borrowing costs in the future at a time when the authority may not be able to avoid new borrowing to finance capital expenditure or refinance maturing debt.

2.2 Policy on Borrowing in Advance of Need

The Council will not borrow purely in order to profit from investment of extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be within approved Capital Financing Requirement estimates and will be considered carefully to ensure that value for money can be demonstrated and that the Council can ensure the security of such funds. Risks associated with any borrowing in advance activity will be subject to prior appraisal and subsequent reporting.

2.3 Debt Rescheduling

Officers continue to regularly review opportunities for debt rescheduling, but there has been a considerable widening of the difference between new borrowing and repayment rates, which has resulted in much fewer opportunities to realise any savings or benefits from rescheduling PWLB debt.

The reasons for any rescheduling to take place will include:

- the generation of cash savings and / or discounted cash flow savings;
- helping to fulfil the treasury strategy;
- enhance the balance of the portfolio (amend the maturity profile and/or the balance of volatility).

The strategy is to continue to seek opportunity to reduce the overall level of Council's debt where prudent to do so, thus providing in future years cost reduction in terms of lower debt repayments

costs, and potential for making savings by running down investment balances to repay debt prematurely as short term rates on investments are likely to be lower than rates paid on current debt. All rescheduling will be agreed by the Chief Finance Officer.

2.4 Interest Rate Risk & Continual Review

The total borrowing need in **Table 2**, as well as the debt at risk of maturity shown in **Table 4** is the extent to which the Council is subject to interest rate risk.

Table 4	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	£m	£m	£m
Maturing Debt	4	6	4
Debt Subject to early repayments options	6	6	6
Total debt at risk of maturity	10	12	10

Officers continue to review the need to borrow taking into consideration the potential increases in borrowing costs, the need to finance new capital expenditure, refinancing maturing debt, and the cost of carry that might incur a revenue loss between borrowing costs and investment returns.

Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution will be adopted with the 2021/22 treasury operations. The Chief Finance Officer will continue to monitor interest rates in financial markets and adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances:

- if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp fall in long and short term rates (e.g. due to a marked increase of risks around relapse into recession or of risks of deflation), then long term borrowings will be postponed, and potential rescheduling from fixed rate funding into short term borrowing will be considered.
- if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a much sharper rise in long and short term rates than that currently forecast, perhaps arising from an acceleration in the start date and in the rate of increase in central rates in the USA and UK, an increase in world economic activity or a sudden increase in inflation risks, then the portfolio position will be re-appraised with the likely action that fixed rate funding will be drawn whilst interest rates are still lower than they will be in the next few years.

3. MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY STATEMENT

The Council is required to pay off an element of the accumulated General Fund capital spend each year (the Capital Financing Requirement - CFR) through a revenue charge (the Minimum Revenue Provision - MRP). Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) regulations require the full Council to approve an MRP Statement in advance of each year. A variety of options are available to Councils, so long as the principle of any option selected ensures a prudent provision to redeem its debt liability over a period which is commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure is estimated to provide benefits (i.e. estimated useful life of the asset being financed).

The policy below reflects a change in the policy as approved and implemented for 2018/19 onwards; no further changes are proposed. The Council is recommended to approve the following MRP Statement for 2021/22 onwards:

For borrowing incurred before 1 April 2008, the MRP policy will be:

- Annuity basis over a maximum of 40 years.

From borrowing incurred after 1 April 2008, the MRP policy will be:

- Asset Life Method (annuity method) – MRP will be based on the estimated life of the assets, in accordance with the proposed regulations. A maximum useful economic life of 50 years for land and 40 years for other assets. This option will also be applied for any expenditure capitalised under a capitalisation directive.

For PFI schemes, leases and closed landfill sites that come onto the Balance Sheet, the MRP policy will be:

- Asset Life Method (annuity method) - The MRP will be calculated according to the flow of benefits from the asset, and where the principal repayments increase over the life of the asset. Any related MRP will be equivalent to the “capital repayment element” of the annual charge payable.

There is the option to charge more than the prudent provision of MRP each year through a Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP).

For loans to third parties that are being used to fund expenditure that is classed as capital in nature, the policy will be to set aside the repayments of principal as capital receipts to finance the initial capital advance in lieu of making an MRP.

In view of the variety of different types of capital expenditure incurred by the Council, which is not in all cases capable of being related to an individual asset, asset lives will be assessed on a basis which most reasonably reflects the anticipated period of benefit that arises from the expenditure. Also, whatever type of expenditure is involved, it will be grouped together in a manner which reflects the nature of the main component of expenditure. This approach also allows the Council to defer the introduction of an MRP charge for new capital projects/land purchases until the year after the new asset becomes operational rather than in the year borrowing is required to finance the capital spending.

4. ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The MHCLG and CIPFA have extended the meaning of ‘investments’ to include both financial and non-financial investments. This report deals with financial investments. Non-financial investments are covered in the Capital Strategy.

The Council’s investment policy has regard to the following:

- MHCLG’s Guidance on Local Government Investments (the “Guidance”)
- CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes 2017 (the “Code”)
- CIPFA Treasury Management Guidance Notes 2018

The Council’s investment priorities will be the security of capital first, portfolio liquidity second and then yield (return).

4.1 Annual Investment Strategy for 2021/22

Investments will be made with reference to the core balance and cash flow requirements and the outlook for interest rates.

Bank Rate is unlikely to rise from 0.10% for a considerable period. It is very difficult to say when it may start rising. Link Asset Services (LAS) forecast assumes that investment earnings from money market-related instruments will be below 0.50% for the foreseeable future. LAS’s forecast for Bank Rate (and therefore the rate earned on liquid investments) at each financial year end (i.e. March) are:

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
0.10%	0.10%	0.10%	0.10%

The Bank of England mentioned in August / September 2020 that it is unlikely to introduce a negative Bank Rate, at least in the next 6 -12 months, and in November omitted any mention of negative rates in the minutes of the meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee. As part of the response to the pandemic and lockdown, the Bank and the Government have provided financial markets and businesses with access to credit, either directly or through commercial banks.

LAS's view on the prospect for interest rates, including their forecast for short term investment rates is appended at Annex B.

Following consultation, changes to the strategy were made from 2018/19 to broaden the risk profile by reducing liquidity and to include some suitable, alternative investment products that are held for the medium (2-5 years) to longer term (5 years+). These products can generate better overall returns but there is a higher risk of volatility of performance so a longer term commitment is required.

During 2018/19, £5m was invested in the CCLA Pooled Property Fund which was the first step into utilising the new instruments within the revised strategy. It was previously expected that a further £10m would take place during 2019/20. Further investment in property funds was paused during 2019/20 due to a combination of factors. Firstly, officers were looking to assess the impact of the withdrawal from the EU before further investments were made. A continuation of moving deadlines has therefore drawn out the investment decision. Additionally, the UK property market is forecast to take a significant downturn over the next 2-3 years. It is therefore not an appropriate time to increase investment balances with property funds.

An options appraisal process was undertaken during 2019/20 to ascertain a) an appropriate level of cash balances that can be invested into longer term instruments and b) which other instruments are most appropriate to expand and diversify the Council's investment portfolio. This work has been also paused during 2020/21 as a result of the economic impact and market uncertainty that remains as a result of the COVID pandemic and the outcome of Brexit.

Table 5 below summarises the changes to the 2018/19 & 2019/20 strategies from those approved in 2017/18. No further changes are proposed for 2021/22. Each of the new investment products included are described in more detail in Annex E. The inclusion of an investment product category in the strategy does not automatically result in investments being placed – investments will only be placed following a due diligence procedure as described above.

Table 5 - Investment options	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Money Market Funds (Including LVNAV)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bank Notice Accounts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fixed Term Bank Deposits	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
UK Local Authorities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enhanced Money Market Funds (VNAV)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Building Societies	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pooled Property Funds	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Corporate Bond Funds (Including Short Dated Bond Funds)	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Multi Asset Funds	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Equity Funds	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓

The primary principle governing the Council's investment criteria is the security of its investments, although the return on the investment is also a key consideration. After this main principle, the Council will ensure that:

- It maintains a policy covering both the categories of investment types it will invest in and the criteria for choosing investment counterparties with adequate security, and monitoring their security;
- It has sufficient liquidity in its investments;
- It receives a yield that is aligned with the level of security and liquidity of its investments;
- Where possible, it actively seeks to support Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) investment products and institutions that meet all of the above requirements.

The preservation of capital is the Council's principal and overriding priority.

4.2 Investment Policy – Management of risk

Treasury management risks and how risks are managed and mitigated are identified in the Council's Treasury Management Practices and related procedures, details of which are held within the Council's Treasury Management Team. The main risks to the Council's treasury activities are:

- liquidity risk (inadequate cash resources);
- market or interest rate risk (fluctuations in interest rate levels and thereby in the value of investments);
- inflation risks (exposure to inflation);
- credit and counterparty risk (security of investments);
- refinancing risks (impact of debt maturing in future years); and
- legal and regulatory risk (i.e. non-compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements, risk of fraud).

The guidance from the MHCLG and CIPFA place a high priority on the management of risk. This authority has adopted a prudent approach to managing risk and defines its risk appetite by the following means: -

- i) Minimum acceptable credit criteria are applied in order to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties. This also enables diversification and thus avoidance of concentration risk. The key ratings used to monitor counterparties are the short term and long-term ratings.
- ii) Other information: ratings will not be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution; it is important to continually assess and monitor the financial sector on both a micro and macro basis and in relation to the economic and political environments in which institutions operate. The assessment will also take account of information that reflects the opinion of the markets. To achieve this consideration the Council will engage with its advisors to maintain a monitor on market pricing such as "credit default swaps" and overlay that information on top of the credit ratings.
- iii) Other information sources used will include the financial press, share price and other such information pertaining to the banking sector in order to establish the most robust scrutiny process on the suitability of potential investment counterparties.
- iv) This authority has defined the list of types of investment instruments that the treasury management team are authorised to use.
 - a. **Specified investments** are those with a high level of credit quality and subject to a maturity limit of one year. The limits and permitted instruments for specified investments are listed within Table 7.
 - b. **Non-specified investments** are those with less high credit quality, may be for periods in excess of one year, and/or are more complex instruments which require greater consideration by members and officers before being authorised

for use. The limits and permitted instruments for non-specified investments are listed within Table 8.

- v) Lending limits (amounts and maturity) for each counterparty will be set through applying the credit criteria matrix (within Table 7).
- vi) This authority will set a limit for the amount of its investments which are invested for longer than 365 days, detailed in the Treasury Indicators in Annex C.
- vii) With the exception of the UK, investments will only be placed with counterparties from countries with a specified minimum sovereign rating of AA+ (see paragraph 4.3).
- viii) This authority has engaged external consultants, (see paragraph 5.3), to provide expert advice on how to optimise an appropriate balance of security, liquidity and yield, given the risk appetite of this authority in the context of the expected level of cash balances and need for liquidity throughout the year.
- ix) All investments will be denominated in sterling.
- x) As a result of the change in accounting standards for 2018/19 under IFRS 9, this authority will consider the implications of investment instruments which could result in an adverse movement in the value of the amount invested and resultant charges at the end of the year to the General Fund. (In November 2018, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [MHCLG], concluded a consultation for a temporary override to allow English local authorities time to adjust their portfolio of all pooled investments by announcing a statutory override to delay implementation of IFRS 9 for five years commencing from 1.4.18.).

4.3 Sovereign Credit Ratings

For 2021/22 it is recommended to maintain the policy of lending to sovereign nations and their banks which hold either a AAA or AA+ rating, with the exception of the UK which is currently rated AA- by two of the three rating agencies (Aa2 Moody's). Maximum investment limits and duration periods will remain the same as in the previous strategy at £60 million and one year respectively. The list of countries that qualify using this credit criteria (as at the date of this report) are shown below:

AAA Australia, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Singapore, Sweden and Switzerland
AA+ Canada
AA- UK

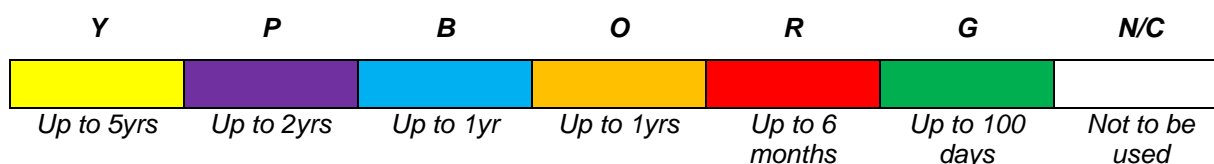
4.4 Creditworthiness Policy

The Council applies the creditworthiness service provided by the Link Group. This service employs a sophisticated modelling approach utilising credit ratings from the three main credit rating agencies which is then supplemented with the following overlays:

- credit watches and credit outlooks from credit rating agencies;
- credit default swap (CDS) spreads to give early warning of likely changes in credit ratings;
- sovereign ratings to select counterparties from only the most creditworthy countries.

This weighted scoring system then produces an end product of a series of colour coded bands which indicate the relative creditworthiness of counterparties. These colour codes are used by the Council to determine the suggested duration for investments.

The Council (in addition to other due diligence consideration) will use counterparties within the following durational bands provided they have a minimum AA+ sovereign rating from three rating agencies:



Typically the minimum credit ratings criteria the Council use will be a Short Term rating (Fitch or equivalents) of F1 and a Long Term rating of A-. There may be occasions when the counterparty ratings from one rating agency are marginally lower than these ratings but may still be used. In these instances consideration will be given to the whole range of ratings available, or other topical market information, to support their use.

The primary principle governing the Council's investment criteria is the security of its investments, although the return on the investment is also a key consideration. After this main principle, the Council will ensure that:

- It maintains a policy covering both the categories of investment types it will invest in and the criteria for choosing investment counterparties with adequate security, and monitoring their security;
- It has sufficient liquidity in its investments.

All credit ratings are monitored daily. The Council is alerted to changes to ratings of all three agencies through its use of the LAS credit worthiness service. If a downgrade results in the counterparty or investment scheme no longer meeting the Council's minimum criteria, its further use as a new investment will be withdrawn immediately.

In addition to the use of credit ratings, the Council is advised of information re movements in Credit Default Swap against the iTraxx benchmark and other market data on a weekly basis. Extreme market movements may result in downgrade of an institution or removal from the Council's lending list. The counterparties in which the Council will invest its cash surpluses is based on officer's assessment of investment security, risk factors, market intelligence, a diverse but manageable portfolio and their participation in the local authority market.

Table 7 below summarises the types of specified investment counterparties available to the Council, and the maximum amount and maturity periods placed on each of these. A full list of the Council's counterparties and the current limits for 2021/22 are appended at Annex A.

Criteria for Specified Investments

Table 7	Country/ Domicile	Instrument	Min. Credit Criteria/LAS colour band	Max. Amount	Max. maturity period
Debt Management and Deposit Facilities (DMADF)	UK	Term Deposits (TDs)	N/A	unlimited	12 Months
Government Treasury bills	UK	TDs	UK Sovereign Rating	unlimited	12 Months
UK Local Authorities**	UK	TDs	UK Sovereign Rating	£60m	12 Months

Table 7	Country/ Domicile	Instrument	Min. Credit Criteria/LAS colour band	Max. Amount	Max. maturity period
Banks – part nationalised	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TDs Deposits on Notice Certificates of Deposit (CDs) 	N/A	£60m	12 Months
Banks	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TDs Deposits on Notice CDs 	Blue	£60m	12 Months
			Orange	£60m	12 Months
			Red	£60m	6 Months
			Green	£60m	100 Days
Building Societies	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TDs Deposits on Notice CDs 	Blue	£60m	12 Months
			Orange	£60m	12 Months
			Red	£60m	6 Months
			Green	£60m	100 Days
Individual Money Market Funds (MMF) CNAV and LVNAV	UK/Ireland/ EU domiciled	AAA Rated Money Market Fund Rating	N/A	£60m	Liquid
VNAV MMF's and Ultra Short Dated Bond Funds	UK/Ireland/EU domiciled	AAA Rated Bond Fund Fund Rating	N/A	£60m	Liquid
Banks – Non-UK	Those with sovereign rating of at least AA+*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TDs Deposits on Notice CDs 	Blue	£60m	12 Months
			Orange	£60m	12 Months
			Red	£60m	6 Months
			Green	£60m	100 Days

*See Paragraph 4.3 for full list of countries that meet these criteria

** Local Authorities appear on both Specified and Non-specified investment list – an investment with a LA for up to a year is Specified, and between 1-2 years is Non-specified. The maximum amount that can be lent to any single Local Authority is £60m across both specified and Unspecified Investments

Non-Specified investments are any other types of investment that are not defined as specified. The identification and rationale supporting the selection of these other investments and the maximum limits to be applied are set out in **Table 8** below:

Table 8	Minimum credit criteria	Maximum investments	Period
UK Local Authorities**	Government Backed	£60m	2 years
Corporate Bond Fund(s)	Investment Grade	£30m	2 - 5 years
Pooled Property Fund(s)	N/A	£30m	5+ years
Mixed Asset Fund(s)	N/A	£30m	2 - 5 years

Short Dated Bond Fund(s)	N/A	£30m	2 – 5 years
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*** Local Authorities appear on both Specified and Non-specified investment list – an investment with a LA for up to a year is Specified, and between 1-2 years is Non-specified. The maximum amount that can be lent to any single Local Authority is £60m across both specified and Unspecified Investments*

The maximum amount that can be invested will be monitored in relation to the Council's surplus monies and the level of reserves. The approved counterparty list will be maintained by referring to an up-to-date credit rating agency reports, and the Council will liaise regularly with brokers for updates. Where Externally Managed Funds are not rated, a selection process will evaluate relative risks & returns. Security of the council's money and fund volatility will be key measures of suitability. Counterparties may be added to or removed from the list only with the approval of the Chief Finance Officer. A full list of the Council's counterparties and the current limits for 2021/22 are appended at Annex A.

5. OTHER TREASURY ISSUES

5.1 Banking Services

NatWest, which is part Government owned, currently provides banking services for the Council.

5.2 Training

The CIPFA Code requires the responsible officer to ensure that members with responsibility for treasury management receive adequate training in treasury management. This especially applies to members responsible for scrutiny. Training was last provided to Audit Committee members on 22 November 2018 and further training will be arranged as required.

The training needs of treasury management officers are periodically reviewed and training arranged as required.

5.3 Policy on the use of External Service Providers

The Council uses Link Asset Services as its external treasury management advisors.

The Council recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the Council at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers. It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed, documented and subject to regular review.

5.4 Lending to Third Parties

The Council has the power to lend monies to third parties subject to a number of criteria. These are not treasury type investments rather they are policy investments. Any activity will only take place after relevant due diligence has been undertaken.

5.5 Updates to Accounting Requirements

▪ IFRS9 – local authority override – English local authorities

The MHCLG enacted a statutory over-ride from 1 April 2018 for a five year period until 31 March 2023 following the introduction of IFRS 9 and the requirement for any capital gains or losses on marketable funds to be chargeable in year. This has the effect of allowing

any capital losses on funds to be held on the balance sheet until 31 March 2023, allowing councils to initiate an orderly withdrawal of funds if required.

▪ **IFRS 16 – Leasing**

The CIPFA Code of Practice will incorporate the requirement to account for all leases onto the council's balance sheet. There have been indications that the implementation date for this is going to be set back to 2022/23 due to pressures on staff from the COVID Pandemic.

Once implemented, this has the following impact to the Treasury Management Strategy:

- The MRP Policy sets out how MRP will be applied for leases bought onto the balance sheet;
- The Council's Capital Financing Requirement authorised limit and operational boundary for 2022/23 onwards has been increased to reflect the estimated effect of this change. These limits can be amended during 2021/22 if required and brought to full Council to amend with the TMSS Mid Year report if the limits need to be increased following some more detailed work on the leases to be bought onto the balance sheet.

Counterparty List 2021/22

ANNEX A

Bank with duration colour	Country	Fitch Ratings				Moody's Ratings		S & P Ratings		CDS Price	ESCC Duration	Link Duration Limit	Money Limit
Specified Investments:		L Term	S Term	Viab.	Supp.	L Term	S Term	L Term	S Term		(Months)	(Months)	(£m)
Lloyds Banking Group:													
Lloyds Bank	UK	A+	F1+	a	5	A1	P-1	A+	A-1	33.85	6	6	60
Bank of Scotland	UK	A+	F1	a	5	A1	P-1	A+	A-1	54.82	6	6	
RBS/NatWest Group:													
NatWest Bank	UK	A+	F1	a	5	A1	P-1	A	A-1	-	12	12	60
Royal Bank of Scotland	UK	A+	F1	a	5	A1	P-1	A	A-1	-	12	12	
HSBC Bank	UK	AA-	F1+	a	1	Aa3	P-1	A+	A-1	33.32	12	12	60
Barclays Bank	UK	A+	F1	a	5	A1	P-1	A	A-1	54.82	6	6	60
Santander (UK)	UK	A+	F1	a	2	A1	P-1	A	A-1	-	6	6	60
Goldman Sachs IB	UK	A+	F1	-	1	A1	P-1	A+	A-1	50.47	6	6	60
Standard Chartered Bank	UK	A+	F1	a	5	A1	P-1	A	A-1	32.32	6	6	60
Nationwide Building Society	UK	A	F1	a	5	A1	P-1	A	A-1	-	6	6	60
Non UK Counterparties:													
Australia & New Zealand Banking Group	Australia	A+	F1	a+	1	Aa3	P-1	AA-	A-1+	22.89	12	12	60
Commonwealth Bank of Australia	Australia	A+	F1	a+	1	Aa3	P-1	AA-	A-1+	24.61	12	12	60
National Australia Bank	Australia	A+	F1	a+	1	Aa3	P-1	AA-	A-1+	24.61	12	12	60
Westpac Banking Corporation	Australia	A+	F1	a+	1	Aa3	P-1	AA-	A-1+	25.60	12	12	60
Royal Bank of Canada	Canada	AA	F1+	aa	5	Aa2	P-1	AA-	A-1+	-	12	12	60
Toronto Dominion	Canada	AA-	F1+	aa-	5	Aa1	P-1	AA-	A-1+	-	12	12	60
Dev. Bank of Singapore	Singapore	AA-	F1+	aa-	1	Aa1	P-1	AA-	A-1+	-	12	12	60
Oversea Chinese Banking Corp	Singapore	AA-	F1+	aa-	1	Aa1	P-1	AA-	A-1+	-	12	12	60
United Overseas Bank	Singapore	AA-	F1+	aa-	1	Aa1	P-1	AA-	A-1+	-	12	12	60

Continued Counterparty list Bank with duration colour	Country	Fitch Ratings				Moody's Ratings		S & P Ratings		CDS Price	ESCC Duration	Link Duration Limit	Money Limit
		L Term	S Term	Viab.	Supp.	L Term	S Term	L Term	S Term		(Months)	(Months)	(£m)
Svenska H	Sweden	AA	F1+	aa	5	Aa2	P-1	AA-	A-1+	-	12	12	60
Swedbank AB	Sweden	A+	F1+	a+	5	Aa3	P-1	A+	A-1	-	12	12	60
ABN AMRO Bank	Netherlands	A	F1	a	5	A1	P-1	A	A-1	-	6	6	60
Rabobank	Netherlands	A+	F1	a+	5	Aa3	P-1	A+	A-1	20.24	12	12	60
ING Bank NV	Netherlands	AA-	F1+	a+	5	Aa3	P-1	A+	A-1	20.49	12	12	60
UBS	Switzerland	AA-	F1+	a+	5	Aa2	P-1	A+	A-1	27.31	12	12	60
Credit Suisse	Switzerland	A	F1	a	5	Aa3	P-1	A+	A-1	45.85	6	6	60
DZ Bank	Germany	AA-	F1+	-	WD	Aa1	P-1	AA-	A-1+	-	12	12	60
Danske Bank	Denmark	A	F1	a	5	Aa2	P-1	A	A-1	30.11	6	6	60

Yellow	Purple	Blue	Orange	Red	Green	No Colour
<i>Up to 5yrs</i>	<i>Up to 2yrs</i>	<i>Up to 1yr (semi nationalised UK banks)</i>	<i>Up to 1yr</i>	<i>Up to 6 months</i>	<i>Up to 100 days</i>	<i>Not to be used</i>

Non-Specified Investments:			
	Minimum credit Criteria	Maximum Investments	Period
UK Local Authorities	Government Backed	£60m	2 years
Corporate Bond Fund(s)	Investment Grade	£30m	2 – 5 years
Pooled Property Fund(s)	N/A	£30m	5+ years
Mixed Asset Fund(s)	N/A	£30m	2 - 5 years
Short Dated Bond Fund(s)	N/A	£30m	2 - 5 years

ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Provided by Link Asset Services 6 January 2021

UK. The key quarterly meeting of the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee kept Bank Rate unchanged on 5th November 2020. However, it revised its economic forecasts to take account of a second national lockdown in November 2020 which is obviously going to put back economic recovery and do further damage to the economy. It therefore decided to do a further tranche of quantitative easing (QE) of £150bn, to start in January when the current programme of £300bn of QE, announced in March to June, runs out. It did this so that “announcing further asset purchases now should support the economy and help to ensure the unavoidable near-term slowdown in activity was not amplified by a tightening in monetary conditions that could slow the return of inflation to the target”.

Its forecasts appeared, at the time, to be rather optimistic in terms of three areas:

- The economy would recover to reach its pre-pandemic level in Q1 2022
- The Bank also expects there to be excess demand in the economy by Q4 2022.
- CPI inflation is therefore projected to be a bit above its 2% target by the start of 2023 and the “inflation risks were judged to be balanced”.

Significantly, there was no mention of negative interest rates in the minutes or Monetary Policy Report, suggesting that the MPC remains some way from being persuaded of the case for such a policy, at least for the next 6 -12 months. However, rather than saying that it “stands ready to adjust monetary policy”, the MPC this time said that it will take “whatever additional action was necessary to achieve its remit”. The latter seems stronger and wider and may indicate the Bank’s willingness to embrace new tools.

One key addition to the Bank’s forward guidance in August was a new phrase in the policy statement, namely that “it does not intend to tighten monetary policy until there is clear evidence that significant progress is being made in eliminating spare capacity and achieving the 2% target sustainably”. That seems designed to say, in effect, that even if inflation rises to 2% in a couple of years’ time, do not expect any action from the MPC to raise Bank Rate – until they can clearly see that level of inflation is going to be persistently above target if it takes no action to raise Bank Rate. Our Bank Rate forecast currently shows no increase, (or decrease), through to quarter 1 2024 but there could well be no increase during the next five years as it will take some years to eliminate spare capacity in the economy, and therefore for inflationary pressures to rise to cause the MPC concern. Inflation is expected to briefly peak at just over 2% towards the end of 2021, but this is a temporary short lived factor and so not a concern.

However, the minutes did contain several references to downside risks. The MPC reiterated that the “recovery would take time, and the risks around the GDP projection were judged to be skewed to the downside”. It also said “the risk of a more persistent period of elevated unemployment remained material”. Downside risks could well include severe restrictions remaining in place in some form during the rest of December and most of January too. Upside risks included the early roll out of effective vaccines.

COVID-19 vaccines. We had been waiting expectantly for news that various COVID-19 vaccines would be cleared as being safe and effective for administering to the general public. The Pfizer announcement on 9th November was very encouraging as its 90% effectiveness was much higher than the 50-60% rate of effectiveness of flu vaccines which might otherwise have been expected.

However, this vaccine has demanding cold storage requirements of minus 70c that impairs the speed of application to the general population. It has therefore been particularly welcome that the Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine has now also been approved which is much cheaper and only requires fridge temperatures for storage. The Government has 60m doses on order and is aiming to vaccinate at a rate of 2m people per week starting in January, though this rate is currently restricted by a bottleneck on vaccine production; (a new UK production facility is due to be completed in June).

These announcements, plus expected further announcements that other vaccines could be approved soon, have enormously boosted confidence that life could largely return to normal during the second half of 2021, with activity in the still-depressed sectors like restaurants, travel and hotels returning to their pre-pandemic levels; this would help to bring the unemployment rate down. With the household saving rate having been exceptionally high since the first lockdown in March, there is plenty of pent-up demand and purchasing power stored up for these services. A comprehensive roll-out of vaccines might take into late 2021 to fully complete; but if these vaccines prove to be highly effective, then there is a possibility that restrictions could start to be eased, beginning possibly in Q2 2021 once vulnerable people and front-line workers have been vaccinated. At that point, there would be less reason to fear that hospitals could become overwhelmed any more. Effective vaccines would radically improve the economic outlook once they have been widely administered; it may allow GDP to rise to its pre-virus level a year earlier than otherwise and mean that the unemployment rate peaks at 7% in 2021 instead of 9%.

Public borrowing was forecast in November by the Office for Budget Responsibility (the OBR) to reach £394bn in the current financial year, the highest ever peace time deficit and equivalent to 19% of GDP. In normal times, such an increase in total gilt issuance would lead to a rise in gilt yields, and so PwLB rates. However, the QE done by the Bank of England has depressed gilt yields to historic low levels, (as has similarly occurred with QE and debt issued in the US, the EU and Japan). This means that new UK debt being issued, and this is being done across the whole yield curve in all maturities, is locking in those historic low levels through until maturity. In addition, the UK has one of the longest average maturities for its entire debt portfolio, of any country in the world. Overall, this means that the total interest bill paid by the Government is manageable despite the huge increase in the total amount of debt. The OBR was also forecasting that the government will still be running a budget deficit of £102bn (3.9% of GDP) by 2025/26. However, initial impressions are that they have taken a pessimistic view of the impact that vaccines could make in the speed of economic recovery.

Overall, the pace of recovery was not expected to be in the form of a rapid V shape, but a more elongated and prolonged one. The initial recovery was sharp after quarter 1 saw growth at -3.0% followed by -18.8% in quarter 2 and then an upswing of +16.0% in quarter 3; this still left the economy 8.6% smaller than in Q4 2019. It is likely that the one month national lockdown that started on 5th November, will have caused a further contraction of 8% m/m in November so the economy may have then been 14% below its pre-crisis level.

December 2020 / January 2021. Since then, there has been rapid back-tracking on easing restrictions due to the spread of a new mutation of the virus, and severe restrictions were imposed across all four nations. These restrictions were changed on 5th January 2021 to national lockdowns of various initial lengths in each of the four nations, as the NHS was under extreme pressure. It is now likely that wide swathes of the UK will remain under these new restrictions for some months; this means that the near-term outlook for the economy is grim. However, the distribution of vaccines and the expected consequent removal of COVID-19 restrictions, should allow GDP to rebound rapidly in the second half of 2021 so that the economy could climb back to

its pre-pandemic peak as soon as late in 2022. Provided that both monetary and fiscal policy are kept loose for a few years yet, then it is still possible that in the second half of this decade, the economy may be no smaller than it would have been if COVID-19 never happened. The significant caveat is if another mutation of COVID-19 appears that defeats the current batch of vaccines. However, now that science and technology have caught up with understanding this virus, new vaccines ought to be able to be developed more quickly to counter such a development and vaccine production facilities are being ramped up around the world.

Prospect for Interest Rates

The Council has appointed Link Asset Services (LAS) as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The following table gives LAS's central view.

Link Group Interest Rate View 9.11.20														
These Link forecasts have been amended for the reduction in PWLB margins by 1.0% from 26.11.20														
	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24
BANK RATE	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
3 month ave earnings	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
6 month ave earnings	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
12 month ave earnings	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20
5 yr PWLB	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
10 yr PWLB	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30
25 yr PWLB	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80
50 yr PWLB	1.30	1.30	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60

The coronavirus outbreak has done huge economic damage to the UK and economies around the world. After the Bank of England took emergency action in March to cut Bank Rate to first 0.25%, and then to 0.10%, it left Bank Rate unchanged at its subsequent meetings to 5th November, although some forecasters had suggested that a cut into negative territory could happen. However, the Governor of the Bank of England has made it clear that he currently thinks that such a move would do more damage than good and that more quantitative easing is the favoured tool if further action becomes necessary. As shown in the forecast table above, no increase in Bank Rate is expected in the forecast table above as economic recovery is expected to be only gradual and, therefore, prolonged.

The interest rate forecasts provided by Link above were predicated on an assumption of a reasonable agreement being reached on trade negotiations between the UK and the EU by 31st December 2020. Now that a trade deal has been agreed. Brexit may reduce the economy's potential growth rate in the long run. However, much of that drag is now likely to be offset by an acceleration of productivity growth triggered by the digital revolution brought about by the COVID crisis.

The balance of risks to the UK

- The overall balance of risks to economic growth in the UK is probably now skewed to the upside, but is still subject to some uncertainty due to the virus and the effect of any mutations, and how quick vaccines are in enabling a relaxation of restrictions.
- There is relatively little UK domestic risk of increases or decreases in Bank Rate and significant changes in shorter term PWLB rates. The Bank of England has effectively ruled out the use of negative interest rates in the near term and increases in Bank Rate are likely to be some years away given the underlying economic expectations. However, it is always possible that safe

haven flows, due to unexpected domestic developments and those in other major economies, could impact gilt yields, (and so PWLB rates), in the UK.

Downside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates currently include:

- UK government takes too much action too quickly to raise taxation or introduce austerity measures that depress demand in the economy.
- UK - Bank of England takes action too quickly, or too far, over the next three years to raise Bank Rate and causes UK economic growth, and increases in inflation, to be weaker than we currently anticipate.
- A resurgence of the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis. The ECB has taken monetary policy action to support the bonds of EU states, with the positive impact most likely for “weaker” countries. In addition, the EU agreed a €750bn fiscal support package. These actions will help shield weaker economic regions for the next two or three years. However, in the case of Italy, the cost of the virus crisis has added to its already huge debt mountain and its slow economic growth will leave it vulnerable to markets returning to taking the view that its level of debt is unsupportable. There remains a sharp divide between northern EU countries favouring low debt to GDP and annual balanced budgets and southern countries who want to see jointly issued Eurobonds to finance economic recovery. This divide could undermine the unity of the EU in time to come.
- Weak capitalisation of some European banks, which could be undermined further depending on extent of credit losses resultant of the pandemic.
- German minority government & general election in 2021. In the German general election of September 2017, Angela Merkel’s CDU party was left in a vulnerable minority position dependent on the fractious support of the SPD party, as a result of the rise in popularity of the anti-immigration AfD party. The CDU has done badly in subsequent state elections but the SPD has done particularly badly. Angela Merkel has stepped down from being the CDU party leader but she will remain as Chancellor until the general election in 2021. This then leaves a major question mark over who will be the major guiding hand and driver of EU unity when she steps down.
- Other minority EU governments. Austria, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, Ireland and Belgium also have vulnerable minority governments dependent on coalitions which could prove fragile.
- Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary now form a strongly anti-immigration bloc within the EU, and they had threatened to derail the 7 year EU budget until a compromise was thrashed out in late 2020. There has also been a rise in anti-immigration sentiment in Germany and France.
- Geopolitical risks, for example in China, Iran or North Korea, but also in Europe and other Middle Eastern countries, which could lead to increasing safe haven flows.

Upside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates

- UK - a significant rise in inflationary pressures e.g. caused by a stronger than currently expected recovery in the UK economy after effective vaccines are administered quickly to the UK population, leading to a rapid resumption of normal life and return to full economic activity across all sectors of the economy.
- The Bank of England is too slow in its pace and strength of increases in Bank Rate and, therefore, allows inflationary pressures to build up too strongly within the UK economy, which then necessitates a rapid series of increases in Bank Rate to stifle inflation.

Investment and borrowing rates

- Investment returns are likely to remain exceptionally low during 2021/22 with little increase in the following two years.
- Borrowing interest rates fell to historically very low rates as a result of the COVID crisis and the quantitative easing operations of the Bank of England: indeed, gilt yields up to 6 years were negative during most of the first half of 20/21. The policy of avoiding new borrowing by running down spare cash balances has served local authorities well over the last few years. However, this needs to be carefully reviewed to avoid incurring higher borrowing costs in the future when authorities may not be able to avoid new borrowing to finance capital expenditure and/or the refinancing of maturing debt.
- There will remain a significant cost of carry, (the difference between higher borrowing costs and lower investment returns), to any new long-term borrowing that causes a temporary increase in cash balances as this position will, most likely, incur a revenue cost.

ANNEX C

PRUDENTIAL AND TREASURY INDICATORS 2021/22 to 2023/24

The Council's capital expenditure plans are a key driver of treasury management activities. The output of the capital expenditure plans is reflected in prudential indicators. Local Authorities are required to 'have regard to' the Prudential Code and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years to ensure that the Council's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Code sets out the indicators that must be used but does not suggest limits or ratios as these are for the authority to set itself.

The Prudential Indicators for 2021/22 to 2023/24 are set out in **Table A** below:

Table A	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate
Capital Expenditure £m (gross) Council's capital expenditure plans	£92m	£66m	£53m
Capital Financing Requirement £m* Measures the underlying need to borrow for capital purposes (including PFI & Leases)	£375m	£406m	£405m
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream** Identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income) against net revenue stream	4.50%	4.67%	4.72%

* From 2020/21, the CFR includes an estimate for leases that will be bought onto the balance sheet under a change in leasing accounting regulations.

** the ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream illustrates the percentage of the Council's net revenue budget being used to finance the council's borrowing. This includes interest costs relating to the council's borrowing portfolio and MRP, net of the investment income from the council's investment portfolio.

The Treasury Management Code requires that Local Authorities set a number of indicators for treasury performance in addition to the Prudential Indicators which fall under the Prudential Code. The Treasury Indicators for 2021/22 to 2023/24 are set out in **Tables B & C** below. These have been calculated and determined by Officers in compliance with the Treasury Management Code of Practice.:

Table B	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate
Authorised Limit for External Debt £m* The Council is expected to set a maximum authorised limit for external debt. This represents a limit beyond which external debt is prohibited, and this limit needs to be set or revised by Full Council.	£405m	£436m	£435m
Operational boundary for external debt £m* The Council is required to set an operational boundary for external debt. This is the limit which external debt is not normally expected to exceed. This indicator may be breached temporarily for operational reasons.	£385m	£416m	£415m
Principal Sums invested for longer than 365 days	£60m	£60m	£60m

Control on interest rate exposure: Upper limit for fixed interest rate exposure Identifies a maximum limit for fixed interest rates for borrowing and investments.	100%	100%	100%
Control on interest rate exposure: Upper limit for variable interest rate exposure Identifies a maximum limit for variable interest rates for borrowing and investments.	15%	15%	15%

**From 2021/22 The Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary includes an estimate for leases that will be bought onto the balance sheet under a change in leasing accounting regulations.*

Table C Maturity Structure of fixed interest rate borrowing The Council needs to set upper and lower limits with respect to the maturity structure of its borrowing.		
	Lower	Upper
Under 12 months	0%	25%
12 months to 2 years	0%	40%
2 years to 5 years	0%	60%
5 years to 10 years	0%	70%
Over 10 years	0%	90%

SCHEME OF DELEGATION

1. Full Council

In line with best practice, Full Council is required to receive and approve, as a minimum, three main reports each year, which incorporate a variety of policies, estimates and actuals. These reports are:

i. Treasury Management Policy and Strategy Report

The report covers:

- the capital plans (including prudential indicators);
- the Capital Strategy;
- a Minimum Revenue Provision Policy (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time);
- the Treasury Management Strategy (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised) including treasury indicators; and
- an investment strategy (the parameters on how investments are to be managed).

ii. A Mid-Year Review Report and a Year End Stewardship Report

These will update members with the progress of the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and indicating whether the treasury strategy is meeting the strategy or whether any policies require revision. The report also provides details of a selection of actual prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operations compared to the estimates within the strategy.

2. Cabinet

- Approval of the Treasury Management quarterly update reports;
- Approval of the Treasury Management outturn report.

3. Audit Committee

- Scrutiny of performance against the strategy.

4. Role of the Section 151 Officer

The Section 151 (responsible) Officer:

- recommending clauses, treasury management policy/practices for approval, reviewing the same regularly, and monitoring compliance;
- submitting regular treasury management policy reports;
- submitting budgets and budget variations;
- receiving and reviewing management information reports;
- reviewing the performance of the treasury management function;
- ensuring the adequacy of treasury management resources and skills, and the effective division of responsibilities within the treasury management function;
- ensuring the adequacy of internal audit, and liaising with external audit;
- recommending the appointment of external service providers.

There are further responsibilities for the S151 Officer identified within the 2017 Code in respect of non-financial investments. They are identified and listed in the Capital Strategy where relevant.

INVESTMENT PRODUCT GLOSSARY

Bank / Building Society: Accounts, deposits, certificates of deposit and senior unsecured bonds with banks and building societies, other than multilateral development banks. These investments are subject to the risk of credit loss via a bail-in should the regulator determine that the bank is failing or likely to fail.

Bank / Building Society Secured (Covered Bonds): These investments are secured on the bank's assets, which limit the potential losses in the unlikely event of insolvency, and means that they are exempt from bail-in.

Corporate Bonds: Bonds issued by companies other than banks and registered providers. These investments are not subject to bail-in but are exposed to the risk of the company going insolvent.

Enhanced Cash / Ultra Short Dated Bond Funds: Funds designed to produce an enhanced return over and above a Money Market Fund. The manager may use a wider range of alternative options to try and generate excess performance. These could include different counterparties, instruments as well as longer dated investments.

Equity Fund: Equity funds are pooled investment vehicles that will focus investments primarily in UK equities.

Government: Loans, bonds and bills issued or guaranteed by UK government, local authorities and supranational banks. These investments are not subject to bail-in, and there is a minimal risk of insolvency.

Money Market Funds: An open ended fund that invests in short term debt securities, offers same-day liquidity and very low volatility.

Mixed Asset Funds: Rather than focus on a particular asset class, these funds will look to invest across a broader range of classes in an effort to provide investors with a smoother performance on a year-to-year basis. Primarily, the asset classes will be equities and fixed income, but the latter will include both corporate and government-level investments.

Pooled Property Funds: Shares in diversified property investment vehicles. Property funds offer enhanced returns over the longer term but are more volatile in the short term. The funds have no defined maturity date, but are available for withdrawal after a notice period

Short Dated Bond Funds: Funds designed to produce an enhanced return over and above an Ultra Short Dated Fund. The manager may use a wider range of alternative options to try and generate excess performance. These could include different counterparties, instruments as well as longer dated and a proportion of lower rated investments. The return on the funds are typically much higher but can be more volatile than Ultra-Short Dated bond funds, so a longer investment time horizon is recommended.