TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2020/21 Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Annual Investment Strategy

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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 low risk counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's low 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. A 5 year Capital Programme is therefore developed to provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council after taking into account the availability of other sources of funding, i.e. external grant, earmarked reserves, capital receipts, revenue and capital resources. The management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans (external borrowing), or using longer-term cash flow surpluses in lieu of external borrowing (internal borrowing). On occasion, when it is prudent and economic, any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.

The Council's Corporate Plan identifies the Corporate Objectives of the Council and which then informs capital investment requirements. The 2020/21 to 2024/25 Capital Programme therefore includes significant capital investment which will require resourcing, from revenue, earmarked reserves, capital receipts, grant income, and borrowing.

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.

Whilst any commercial initiatives or loans to third parties will impact on the treasury function, these activities are generally classed as non-treasury activities, (arising usually from capital expenditure),and are separate from the day to day treasury management activities.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (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."

The treasury management activity involves substantial sums of money, which it borrows and invests. This exposes the Council to potential large financial risk, which can include the loss of invested funds, or the revenue consequence of changes in interest rates. Therefore the successful identification, control and monitoring of risk are integral to this function and include credit and counterparty risk, liquidity risk, market or interest rate risk, refinancing risk and legal and regulatory risk.

1.2 Reporting requirements

1.2.1 Capital Investment Strategy

The CIPFA 2017 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes require all Local Authorities to prepare a capital strategy report, which will 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 this 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. The capital strategy will show:

- The corporate governance arrangements for these types of activities;
- Any service objectives relating to the investments;
- The expected income, costs and resulting contribution;
- The debt related to the activity and the associated interest costs;
- The payback period (MRP policy);
- For non-loan type investments, the cost against the current market value;
- The risks associated with each activity.

Where a physical asset is being bought, details of market research, advisers used, (and their monitoring), ongoing costs and investment requirements and any credit information will be disclosed, including the ability to sell the asset and realise the investment cash.

Where the Council has borrowed to fund any non-treasury investment, there should also be an explanation of why borrowing was required and why the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

(MHCLG) Investment Guidance and CIPFA Prudential Code have not been adhered to.

If any non-treasury investment sustains a loss during the final accounts and audit process, the strategy and revenue implications will be reported through the same procedure as the capital strategy.

To demonstrate the proportionality between the treasury operations and the non-treasury operation, high-level comparators are shown throughout this report.

1.2.2 Treasury Management reporting

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

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).

A mid-year treasury management report – This will update members with the progress of the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and whether any policies require revision. In addition, the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee will receive quarterly update reports.

An annual treasury report – This is a backward looking review documents and provides details of a selection of actual prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operations compared to the estimates within the strategy.

Scrutiny

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

1.3 Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21

The strategy for 2020/21 covers two main areas:

Capital issues

- the capital expenditure plans and the associated prudential indicators;
- the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy.

Treasury management issues

- the current treasury position;
- treasury indicators which limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council;
- prospects for interest rates;
- the borrowing strategy;
- policy on borrowing in advance of need;
- debt rescheduling;
- the investment strategy;
- creditworthiness policy; and
- the policy on use of external service providers.

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 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. This is mandatory training for the Governance and Audit Committee and is delivered annually. This training was undertaken on 14 January 2020. Further training will be arranged as required. The training needs of treasury management officers are periodically reviewed.

1.5 Treasury management consultants

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

The Council recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the organisation at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers. All decisions will be undertaken with regards to all available information, including, but not solely, our treasury advisers.

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 and documented, and subjected to regular review.

The scope of investments within the Council's operations now includes both conventional treasury investments, (the placing of residual cash from the Council's functions), and more commercial type investments, such as investment properties. The commercial type investments require specialist advisers, and the Council currently uses Cushman and Wakefield in relation to this activity.

2. THE CAPITAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2020/21 – 2022/23

The Council's capital expenditure plans are the key driver of treasury management activity. The output of the capital expenditure plans is reflected in the prudential indicators, which are designed to assist members' overview and confirm capital expenditure plans.

1.1 Capital expenditure

This prudential indicator is a summary of the Council's capital expenditure plans which are included in the approved Capital Programme and which are the key drivers to treasury management activity. The output of the programme is reflected in the Council's prudential indicators, which are designed to provide Members with an overview and Members are asked to approve the capital expenditure forecasts:

Capital Expenditure By Cluster £m	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Estimate	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate
Our People	1.258	1.870	1.301	0.694	0.595
Our Place	6.132	13.438	14.991	7.890	1.181
Our Council	0.195	0.332	0.826	0.300	0.485
Investment	13.494	7.015	7.000	0.000	0.000
Total	**21.079**	**22.655**	**24.118**	**8.883**	**2.261**

Capital expenditure can be financed from a range of external and internal sources. External sources include private sector contributions ie S106 developer agreements, as well as government grants. Internal sources include capital receipts, earmarked reserves, and revenue contributions.

The table below summarises the above capital expenditure plans and how these plans are being financed by capital or revenue resources. Any shortfall of resources results in a financing need ie borrowing.

Financing of capital expenditure £m	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Estimate	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate
Capital receipts	0.000	0.435	2.152	0.000	0.000
External Grants	1.578	1.322	5.728	4.622	0.928
S106	0	0.360	0.500	0.000	0.000
Earmarked Reserves	1.053	2.954	5.538	2.161	1.133
Revenue Resources	0	0.185	0	0.200	0.200
Net financing need for the year	**18.448**	**17.399**	**10.200**	**1.900**	**0.00**

Other long-term liabilities. The above financing need excludes other long term liabilities, such as leasing arrangements which already include borrowing instruments**.**

The forecast of Revenue and Capital Reserves after taking into account contributions to and from these reserves for both capital and revenue purposes are detailed in the table below;

Year End Resources £m	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Estimate	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate
General Fund Balance	3.850	3.636	3.711	3.702	3.694
Earmarked Reserves	15.834	13.858	8.973	7.470	6.542
Total Revenue Reserves	**19.684**	**17,494**	**12.684**	**11.172**	**10.236**
Capital receipts	3.360	2.823	2.139	2.205	2.271
Capital Grants Unapplied	0.587	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total Capital Reserves	**3.947**	**2.823**	**2.139**	**2.205**	**2.271**
Total Useable Reserves	**23.631**	**20.317**	**14.823**	**13.377**	**12.507**

1.2 The Council's borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement)

The second prudential indicator is the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR is simply the total historic outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources. It is essentially a measure of the Council's indebtedness and its underlying borrowing need. Any capital expenditure above, which has not immediately been paid for through a revenue or capital resource, will increase the CFR.

The CFR does not increase indefinitely, as the minimum revenue provision (MRP) is a statutory annual revenue charge which broadly reduces the indebtedness in line with each asset's life, and so charges the economic consumption of capital assets as they are used.

The CFR includes any other long-term liabilities (e.g. finance leases). Whilst these increase the CFR, and therefore the Council's borrowing requirement, these types of scheme include a borrowing facility by the lease provider and so the Council is not required to separately borrow for these schemes. The Council is asked to approve the CFR projections below:

£m	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Estimate	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate
Capital Financing Requirement					
Accounting Adj	1.065	1.065	1.065	1.065	1.065
Finance Leases	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Prudential Borrowing	22.016	39.305	49.242	50.592	49.220
Total CFR	**23.081**	**40.370**	**50.307**	**51.657**	**50.285**
Of which: Commercial Investment Property	**15.921**	**22.999**	**30.000**	**30.000**	**30.000**
Movement in CFR	**18.367**	**17.289**	**9.937**	**1.350**	**-1.372**

Movement in CFR represented by					
Net financing need for the year (above)	18.403	17.399	10.200	1.900	0.000
Less MRP and other financing movements	-0.036	-0.110	-0.263	-0.550	-1.372
Movement in CFR	**18.367**	**17.289**	**9.937**	**1.350**	**-1.372**

Note:

1. *In 2018/19 the MRP includes finance lease annual principal payments*

A key aspect of the regulatory and professional guidance is that elected members are aware of the size and scope of any commercial activity in relation to the authority's overall financial position. The capital expenditure figures shown in 2.1 and the details above demonstrate the scope of this activity and, by approving these figures, consider the scale proportionate to the Authority's remaining activity.

3. BORROWING

The capital expenditure plans set out in Section 2 provide details of the service activity of the Council. 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 this service activity and the Council's capital strategy. This will involve both the organisation of the cash flow and, where capital plans require, the organisation of appropriate borrowing facilities. The strategy covers the relevant treasury / prudential indicators, the current and projected debt positions and the annual investment strategy.

3.1 Core funds and expected investment balances

The application of resources (capital receipts, reserves etc.) to either finance capital expenditure or other budget decisions to support the revenue budget will have an ongoing impact on investments unless resources are supplemented each year from new sources (asset sales etc.). Detailed below are estimates of the year-end balances for each resource and anticipated day-to-day cash flow balances.

Year End Resources £m	**2018/19 Actual**	**2019/20 Estimate**	**2020/21 Estimate**	**2021/22 Estimate**	**2022/23 Estimate**
CFR	23.082	40.371	50.307	51.657	50.285
Less Leases	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Borrowing CFR	**23.082**	**40.371**	**50.307**	**51.657**	**50.285**
Less PWLB Borrowing	11.000	28.189	38.189	44.089	44.089
Over(-)/Under Borrowing	**12.082**	**12.182**	**12.118**	**7.568**	**6.196**
General Fund Balance	-3.850	-3.636	-3.711	-3.702	-3.694
Earmarked Reserves	-15.834	-13.858	-8.973	-7.470	-6.542
Capital receipts	-3.360	-2.823	-2.139	-2.205	-2.271
Capital Grants Unapplied	-0.587	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Provisions	-1.000	-1.000	-1.000	-1.000	-1.000
Working capital*	1.235	1.235	1.235	1.235	1.235
Expected investments (-) /Borrowing	**-11.314**	**-7,900**	**-2.470**	**-5.574**	**-6.076**

*Working capital balances shown are estimated year-end; these may be higher mid-year

3.2 Current portfolio position

The Council's forward projections for borrowing are summarised below. The table shows the actual external debt (the treasury management operations), against the underlying capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement - CFR), and internal borrowing as a percentage of the CFR.

£m	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Estimate	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate
External Debt					
Debt at 1 April	0	11.000	28.189	38.189	44.089
Expected change in Debt	11.000	17.189	10.000	5.900	0.000
Other long-term liabilities (OLTL)	0.027	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Expected change in OLTL	-0.027	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Gross external debt at 31 March	**11.000**	**28.189**	**38.189**	**44.089**	**44.089**
Internal Borrowing (at 31 March)	11.058	11.268	11.468	7.468	7.468
The Capital Financing Requirement	**23.081**	**40.370**	**50.307**	**51.657**	**50.285**
Internal Borrowing %	**47.91**	**27.91**	**22.80**	**14.46**	**14.85**

Within the prudential indicators there are a number of key indicators to ensure that the Council operates its activities within well-defined limits. One of these is that the Council needs to ensure that its gross debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2019/20 and the following two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years, but ensures that borrowing is not undertaken for revenue or speculative purposes.

The Executive Director of Resources reports that the Council complied with this prudential indicator in the current year and does not envisage difficulties for the future. This view takes into account current commitments, existing plans, and the proposals in this budget report.

3.3 Treasury Indicators: limits to borrowing activity

The operational boundary. This is the limit beyond which external debt is not normally expected to be exceeded. In most cases, this would be a similar figure to the CFR, but may be lower or higher depending on the levels of actual debt and the ability to fund under-borrowing by other cash resources.

Operational boundary £m	2019/20 Estimate	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate
External Debt	28.189	38.189	44.089	44.089
Operational Boundary	**28.189**	**38.189**	**44.089**	**44.089**

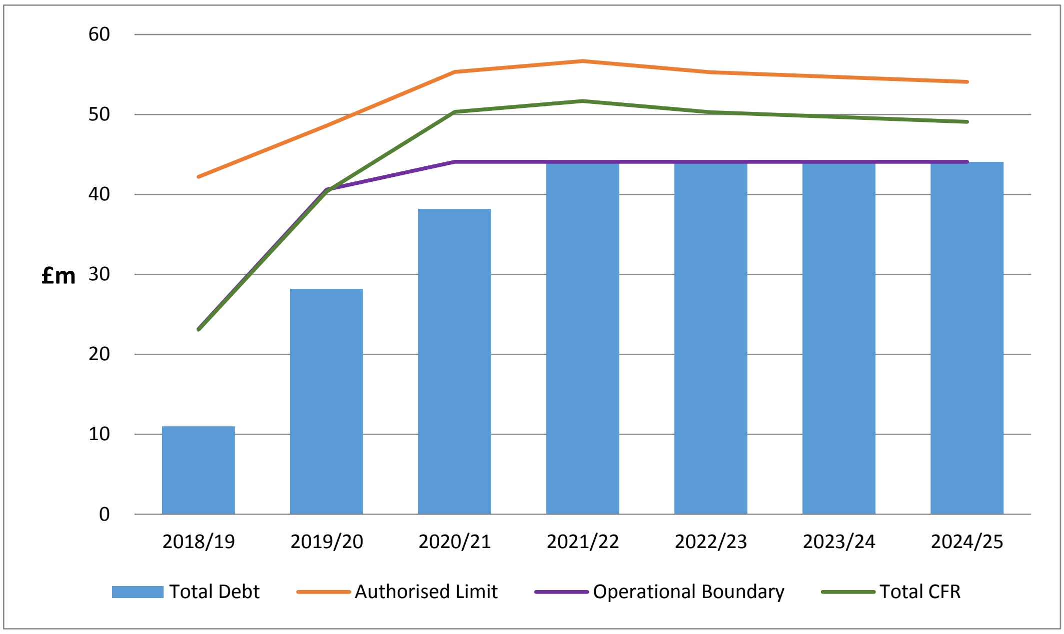
The authorised limit for external debt. A further key prudential indicator represents a control on the maximum level of borrowing. This represents a limit beyond which external debt is prohibited, and this limit needs to be set or revised by the full Council. It reflects the level of external debt which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term.

1. This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003. The Government retains an option to control either the total of all councils' plans, or those of a specific council, although this power has not yet been exercised.
2. The Council is asked to approve the following authorised limit:

Authorised limit £m	2019/20 Estimate	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate
Gross Debt*	48.589	55.307	56.657	55.285
Authorised Limit	**48.589**	**55.307**	**56.657**	**55.285**

**Gross debt estimates allow for external borrowing in advance of need for up to a maximum of two years and includes additional headroom of £5m for unexpected cashflow movements.*

The graph below shows our projections of CFR and borrowing;



3.4 Prospects for interest rates

The Council has appointed Link Asset Services 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 our central view.

Link Asset Services Interest Rate View	Dec-19	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23
Bank Rate View	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25
3 Month LIBID	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.10	1.20	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30
6 Month LIBID	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.10	1.10	1.20	1.30	1.40	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
12 Month LIBID	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.10	1.20	1.30	1.30	1.40	1.50	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70
5yr PWLB Rate	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.50	2.50	2.60	2.70	2.80	2.90	2.90	3.00	3.10	3.20	3.20
10yr PWLB Rate	2.60	2.70	2.70	2.70	2.80	2.90	3.00	3.10	3.20	3.20	3.30	3.30	3.40	3.50
25yr PWLB Rate	3.20	3.30	3.40	3.40	3.50	3.60	3.70	3.70	3.80	3.90	4.00	4.00	4.10	4.10
50yr PWLB Rate	3.10	3.20	3.30	3.30	3.40	3.50	3.60	3.60	3.70	3.80	3.90	3.90	4.00	4.00

(A more detailed interest rate forecast and economic commentary are set out in appendices B and C)

The above forecasts have been based on an assumption that there is an agreed deal on Brexit, including agreement on the terms of trade between the UK and EU, at some point in time. The result of the general election has removed much uncertainty around this major assumption. However, it does not remove uncertainty around whether agreement can be reached with the EU on a trade deal within the short time to December 2020, as the prime minister has pledged.

It has been little surprise that the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has left Bank Rate unchanged at 0.75% so far in 2019 due to the ongoing uncertainty over Brexit and more recently, due to the impending general election. In its meeting on 7 November, the MPC became more dovish due to increased concerns over the outlook for the domestic economy if Brexit uncertainties were to become more entrenched, and for weak global economic growth: if those uncertainties were to materialise, then it is likely the MPC would cut Bank Rate. However, if they were both to dissipate, then rates would need to rise at a “gradual pace and to a limited extent”. Brexit uncertainty has had a dampening effect on UK GDP growth in 2019, especially around mid-year. There is still some residual risk that the MPC could cut Bank Rate as the UK economy is still likely to only grow weakly in 2020 due to continuing uncertainty over whether there could effectively be a no deal Brexit in December 2020 if agreement on a trade deal is not reached with the EU. Until that major uncertainty is removed, or the period for agreeing a deal is extended, it is unlikely that the MPC would raise Bank Rate.

Investment and borrowing rates

- Investment returns are likely to remain low during 2020/21 with little increase in the following two years. However, if major progress was made with an agreed Brexit, then there is upside potential for earnings.

- Borrowing interest rates were on a major falling trend during the first half of 2019-20 but then jumped up by 100 bps on 9.10.19. The policy of avoiding new borrowing by running down spare cash balances has served local authorities well over the last few years. However, the unexpected increase of 100 bps in PWLB rates requires a major rethink of local authority treasury management strategy and risk management.

- 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 short or medium-term borrowing that causes a temporary increase in cash balances as this position will, most likely, incur a revenue cost.

3.5 Borrowing strategy

The Borrowing Strategy covers the relevant prudential and treasury indicators, and the current and projected debt positions as detailed above.

The key objectives of the Council's Borrowing Strategy are;

- To ensure that future external debt is affordable and sustainable within the long term within the revenue budget constraints.
- to borrow to support commercial aspirations, where returns can meet the cost of borrowing.
- to support schemes with a socio-economic value ie for the regeneration and growth of the District.
- to support significant service investment where the cost of borrowing will be offset by efficiencies and/or cost savings
- to potentially borrow in advance of need so that external debt (fixed rate funding) is arranged whilst interest rates are lower than they are projected to be over the next few years; and
- all external debt undertaken will be repaid on loan maturities

The Council is currently maintaining an under-borrowed position. This means that the capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement), has not been fully funded with external loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure. This strategy is prudent as investment returns are low and counterparty risk is still an issue that needs to be considered.

Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution will be adopted with the 2020/21 treasury operations. The Executive Director of Resources will 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 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. Most likely, fixed rate funding will be drawn whilst interest rates are lower than they are projected to be in the next few years.

Any decisions will be reported to the appropriate decision making body at the next available opportunity.

3.6 Policy on borrowing in advance of need

The Council will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be within forward 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 through the mid-year or annual reporting mechanism.

3.7 Debt Rescheduling

Rescheduling of current borrowing in our debt portfolio is unlikely to occur as the 100 bps increase in PWLB rates only applied to new borrowing rates and not to premature debt repayment rates.

If rescheduling was done, it will be reported to the Council, at the earliest meeting following its action.

3.8 New financial institutions as a source of borrowing

Following the decision by the PWLB on 9 October 2019 to increase their margin over gilt yields by 100 bps to 180 basis points on loans lent to local authorities, consideration will also need to be given to sourcing funding at cheaper rates from the following:

- Local authorities (primarily shorter dated maturities)
- Financial institutions (primarily insurance companies and pension funds but also some banks, out of spot or forward dates)
- Municipal Bonds Agency (no issuance at present but there is potential)

The degree which any of these options proves cheaper than PWLB Certainty Rate is still evolving at the time of writing but our advisors will keep us informed.

3.9 Approved sources of Long and Short Term Borrowing

The table below details approved sources of Long and Short term borrowing and the percentage limit (if applicable) of the Council's total borrowing that can be utilised for each source.

On Balance Sheet	Fixed	Variable
PWLB	Unlimited	25%
Municipal bond agency	Unlimited	0
Local authorities	Unlimited	0
Banks	25%	10%
Market (long-term)	25%	10%
Market (temporary)	25%	10%
Local authorities temporary	25%	N/A
Local Bonds	25%	10%
Overdraft (notified in advance)		£1m
Internal (capital receipts & revenue balances)	50%	N/A
Finance leases	Unlimited	N/A

4.0 ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

4.1 Investment policy – management of risk

The MHCLG and CIPFA have extended the meaning of 'investments' to include both financial and non-financial investments. This report deals solely with financial investments, (as managed by the treasury management team). Non-financial investments, essentially the purchase of income yielding assets, 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 ("the CIPFA TM Code") 2017.
- CIPFA Treasury Management Guidance Notes 2018

The Council's investment priorities will be security first, liquidity second, then yield (return).

In accordance with the above guidance from the MHCLG and CIPFA, and in order to minimise the risk to investments, the Council applies minimum acceptable credit criteria in order to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties which also enables diversification and thus avoidance of concentration risk. The key ratings used to monitor counterparties are the Short Term and Long Term ratings.

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.

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.

Investment instruments identified for use in the financial year are listed in Appendix D under the ‘specified’ and ‘non-specified’ investments categories. Counterparty limits will be as set through the Council’s treasury management practices – schedules.

As a result of the change in accounting standards for 2019/20 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.)

4.2 Creditworthiness policy

This Council applies the creditworthiness service provided by Link Asset Services. This service employs a sophisticated modelling approach utilising credit ratings from the three main credit rating agencies - Fitch, Moody’s and Standard & Poor’s. The credit ratings of counterparties are supplemented with the following overlays:

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

This modelling approach combines credit ratings, credit Watches and credit Outlooks in a weighted scoring system which is then combined with an overlay of CDS spreads for which the end product is 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 will therefore use counterparties within the following durational bands*:*

- Yellow 5 years
- Dark pink 5 years for Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit score of 1.25
- Light pink 5 years for Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit score of 1.5
- Purple 2 years

- Blue 1 year (only applies to nationalised or semi nationalised UK Banks)
- Orange 1 year
- Red 6 months
- Green 100 days
- No colour not to be used

Y	Pi1	Pi2	P	B	O	R	G	N/C
1	1.25	1.5	2	3	4	5	6	7
Up to 5yrs	Up to 5yrs	Up to 5yrs	Up to 2yrs	Up to 1yr	Up to 1yr	Up to 6mths	Up to 100days	No Colour

The Link Asset Services' creditworthiness service uses a wider array of information other than just primary ratings. Furthermore, by using a risk weighted scoring system, it does not give undue preponderance to just one agency's ratings.

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.

All credit ratings will be monitored weekly. The Council is alerted to changes to ratings of all three agencies through its use of the Link Asset Services' creditworthiness service.

- if a downgrade results in the counterparty / 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 will be advised of information in movements in credit default swap spreads against the iTraxx benchmark and other market data on a daily basis via its Passport website, provided exclusively to it by Link Asset Services. Extreme market movements may result in downgrade of an institution or removal from the Council's lending list.

Sole reliance will not be placed on the use of this external service. In addition this Council will also use market data and market information, information on any external support for banks to help support its decision making process.

The primary principle covering the Council's investment criteria is the security of it's investments, although the yield or 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, criteria for choosing the investment counterparties with adequate security and monitoring their security. This is set out in the specified and non-specified investment sections below; and

- It has sufficient liquidity in its investments. For this purpose it will set out procedures for determining the maximum periods for which funds may be prudently committed. These procedures also apply to the

Council's prudential indicators covering the maximum principal sums invested.

The Chief Finance Officer will maintain a counterparty list in compliance with the following criteria and will revise the criteria and submit them to Council for approval as necessary. These criteria are separate to that which determines which types of investment instrument are either specified or non-specified as it provides an overall pool of counterparties considered high quality which the Council may use, rather than defining what types of investment instruments are to be used.

Credit rating information is supplied by Link Asset Services, our treasury consultants, on all active counterparties that comply with the criteria below. Any counterparty failing to meet the criteria would be omitted from the counterparty (dealing) list. Any rating changes, rating Watches (notification of a likely change), rating Outlooks (notification of possible longer term change) are provided to officers almost immediately after they occur and this information is considered before dealing.

The criteria for providing a pool of high quality investment counterparties (both specified and non specified investments) is:

- Banks 1 – good credit quality – the Council will only use banks which:
  i. Are UK banks; and/or
  ii. Are non-UK and domiciled in a country which has a minimum sovereign Long Term rating of AA

  And have, as a minimum the following Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poors credit ratings (where rated):

  i. Short Term – F1
  ii. Long Term – A

- Banks 2 – Part nationalised UK bank, can be used provided the bank continues to be part nationalised or it meets the ratings in Banks 1 above.
- Banks 3 – The Council's own banker for transactional purposes if the bank falls below the above criteria, although in this case the balances will be minimised in both monetary size and time invested.
- Bank subsidiary and treasury operation – The Council will use these where the parent bank has provided an appropriate guarantee or has the necessary ratings outlined above.
- Building Societies – The Council will use all societies which:

i. Meet the ratings for banks outlined above;

- Money Market Funds (MMFs) – AAA
- Enhanced Money Market Funds (EMMFs) – AAA
- UK Government (including gilts, treasury bonds and the DMADF)
- Local Authorities, parish councils etc
- Supernational institutions
- Local Authority Property Asset Fund (CCLA)
- Corporate Bond Funds
- Covered Bonds

Use of additional information other than credit ratings. Additional requirements under the Code require the Council to supplement credit rating information. Whilst the above criteria relies primarily on the application of credit ratings to provide a pool of appropriate counterparties for officers to use, additional operational market information will be applied before making any specific investment decision from the agreed pool of counterparties. This additional market information (for example Credit Default Swaps, negative rating Watches/Outlooks) will be applied to compare the relative security of differing investment counterparties.

Time and monetary limits applying to investments. The time and monetary limits for institutions on the Council's counterparty list are as follows (these will cover both specified and non-specified investments). It should be noted that in the case of Lloyds Bank, our current bankers, that as well as allowing £5m fixed term investment in that one institution that there is flexibility to hold, in current account balances at Lloyds Bank, up to £1m 'cash' on any one day:

	Fitch	Moody's	Standard & Poors	Money Limit	Time Limit
Banks 1 – up to 1 year	**F1**	**P1**	**A1**	**£5m per counterparty at Group level**	**1 year**
Banks 1 – over 1 year	**AA**	**Aa2**	**AA**	**£2m maximum exposure**	**1 year to 5 years**
Banks 2 – UK part nationalised				**£5m per counterparty at Group Level**	**1 year**
Banks 3 – Council's own bank if not covered by 1 or 2				**£1m**	**1 Day**
Other Local Authorities				**£5m per counterparty**	**5 years**
Housing Associations				**£1m maximum exposure**	**6 mths**
Bank of England DMADF				**No limit**	**6 mths**
Gilts/Treasury Bills – where no loss of principal if held to maturity				**£5m maximum exposure**	**5 years**
Supranational				**£5m per counterparty**	**1 year**
Quality Corporate Bonds Funds				**£2m**	**5 years**

Local Authority Property Asset Funds				**£4m**	**5 years**
Certificates of Deposit				**£2m**	**5 years**
Covered Bonds				**£1m**	**5 years**
	Fund rating			**Money and/or % Limit**	**Time Limit**
Money market funds	**AAA**			**£5m per counterparty**	**Overnight**
Enhanced money market funds	**AAA**			**£5m**	**5 years**

UK banks – ring fencing

The largest UK banks, (those with more than £25bn of retail / Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) deposits), are required, by UK law, to separate core retail banking services from their investment and international banking activities by 1st January 2019. This is known as “ring-fencing”. Whilst smaller banks with less than £25bn in deposits are exempt, they can choose to opt up. Several banks are very close to the threshold already and so may come into scope in the future regardless.

Ring-fencing is a regulatory initiative created in response to the global financial crisis. It mandates the separation of retail and SME deposits from investment banking, in order to improve the resilience and resolvability of banks by changing their structure. In general, simpler, activities offered from within a ring-fenced bank, (RFB), will be focused on lower risk, day-to-day core transactions, whilst more complex and “riskier” activities are required to be housed in a separate entity, a non-ring-fenced bank, (NRFB). This is intended to ensure that an entity’s core activities are not adversely affected by the acts or omissions of other members of its group.

While the structure of the banks included within this process may have changed, the fundamentals of credit assessment have not. The Council will continue to assess the new-formed entities in the same way that it does others and those with sufficiently high ratings, (and any other metrics considered), will be considered for investment purposes.

4.3 Country limits

The Council has determined that it will only use approved counterparties from countries with a minimum sovereign credit rating of AA from Fitch. The list of countries that qualify using this credit criteria as at the date of this report are shown in Appendix E. This list will be added to, or deducted from, by officers should ratings change in accordance with this policy.

In addition

- No more than £2m will be placed with any non-UK country at any time;
- Limits in place above will apply to a group of companies;
- Sector limits will be monitored regularly for appropriateness

4.4 Investment strategy

In-house funds. Investments will be made with reference to the core balance and cash flow requirements and the outlook for short-term interest rates (i.e. rates for investments up to 12 months). Longer term investment will be undertaken where it is anticipated that levels of reserves and cashflows are adequate over the medium term.

- If it is thought that Bank Rate is likely to rise significantly within the time horizon being considered, then consideration will be given to keeping most investments as being short term or variable.

- Conversely, if it is thought that Bank Rate is likely to fall within that time period, consideration will be given to locking in higher rates currently obtainable, for longer periods.

Investment returns expectations.

On the assumption that the UK and EU agree a Brexit deal by the end of 2019 or soon after, then Bank Rate is forecast to increase only slowly over the next few years to reach 1.00% by quarter 1 2023. Bank Rate forecasts for financial year ends (March) are:

- Q1 2021 0.75%
- Q1 2022 1.00%
- Q1 2023 1.00%

The suggested budgeted investment earnings rates for returns on investments placed for periods up to about three months during each financial year are as follows:

2019/20	0.75%
2020/21	0.75%
2021/22	1.00%
2022/23	1.25%
2023/24	1.50%
2024/25	1.75%
Later years	2.25%

- The overall balance of risks to economic growth in the UK is probably to the downside due to the weight of all the uncertainties over Brexit, as well as a softening global economic picture.

- The balance of risks to increases in Bank Rate and shorter term PWLB rates are broadly similarly to the downside.
- In the event that a Brexit deal is agreed with the EU and approved by Parliament, the balance of risks to economic growth and to increases in Bank Rate is likely to change to the upside.

The Council is expecting to have an average investment portfolio of £13.312m throughout 2020/21 and expects to receive investment income totalling £0.251m as shown below:

Treasury Investment Portfolio	Average Portfolio £m	Interest Rate %	Interest £m
Liquidity Investments	9.790	0.89	0.087
Other Investments	1.022	3.82	0.039
Long Term Investments	2.500	4.99	0.125
Total Investment Income (2020/2021)	**13.312**	**1.88**	**0.251**

Investment treasury indicator and limit - total principal funds invested for greater than 365 days. These limits are set with regard to the Council's liquidity requirements and to reduce the need for early sale of an investment, and are based on the availability of funds after each year-end.

The Council is asked to approve the treasury indicator and limit:

Maximum principal sums invested > 364 & 365 days			
£m	**2020/21**	**2021/22**	**2022/23**
Principal sums invested > 365 days	£6m	£6m	£6m

For its cash flow generated balances, the Council will seek to utilise its business reserve instant access and notice accounts, money market funds and short-dated deposits (overnight to 100 days) in order to benefit from the compounding of interest.

4.5 Investment risk benchmarking

These benchmarks are simple guides to maximum risk, so they may be breached from time to time, depending on movements in interest rates and counterparty criteria. The purpose of the benchmark is that officers will monitor the current and trend position and amend the operational strategy to manage risk as conditions change. Any breach of the benchmarks will be reported, with supporting reasons in the mid-year or Annual Report.

Security - The Council's maximum security risk benchmark for the current portfolio, when compared to these historic default tables, is:

- 0.06% historic risk of default when compared to the whole portfolio**.**

Liquidity – in respect of this area the Council seeks to maintain:

- Liquid short term deposits of at least £4m available with a week's notice.
- Weighted average life benchmark is expected to be 0.25 years, with a maximum of 1 years.

Yield - local measures of yield benchmarks are;

- Investments – internal returns above the 7 day LIBID rate

And in addition that the security benchmark for each individual year is:

	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
Maximum	**0.07%**	**0.19%**	**0.36%**	**0.55%**	**0.77%**

Note: This benchmark is an average risk of default measure, and would not constitute an expectation of loss against a particular investment.

4.6 End of year investment report

At the end of the financial year, the Council will report on its investment activity as part of its Annual Treasury Report.

4.7 Non-Treasury Investments (Commercial Property)

As part of the Capital Programme 2016/17 – 2020-21 approved in March 2016 the Council planned to invest £20m to create a Commercial Property portfolio, to generate a revenue return to support the future sustainability of the Council and therefore protecting the services of the Council. The net return was estimated to be £600k p.a based on the approved £20m investment limit. The first acquisition was made in October 2017. The Council's portfolio currently consists of 6 properties, with £21.666m having been spent on these acquisitions (includes costs) up to the end of October 2019.

The Commercial Property Strategy included the following principles;

The objective is for WLDC to increase the size of this portfolio by making a further investment of £8m in commercial property over the next 3 years to generate a target net income of £500,000 - £600,000 per annum. In May 2018 the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee agreed to increase the total investment figure to £30m. This was on the basis that the individual target lot size should be increase to a maximum of £10m to take advantage of a segment of the market which was less competitive. The increase in total spend was required to maintain a risk managed portfolio at the higher value lot size.

Strategy

Working with the commercial property consultant, Cushman & Wakefield, officers have developed an investment strategy for the Council that aims to balance risk across the portfolio whilst achieving the target returns required.

The strategy will include;

1. To acquire an investment portfolio of commercial property assets in lot sizes of £1.0m to £10.0m, targeting an average lot size of circa £3.5m to £4m across the portfolio and total investment of £30.0m.

2. Authority to complete on acquisitions should be delegated to the Executive Director of Resources in consultation with the Leader of the Council, provided that the purchase is within agreed criteria. All assets will be assessed against these criteria and the Executive Director of Resources will have delegated Authority to complete on the acquisition of assets which score 50 or more out of 70. Any asset which falls below this threshold or registers a zero against any criteria may still be considered but specific justification will need to be provided and the decision to proceed taken to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for approval. An example of how this scoring criteria will be applied is provided at Appendix D of the attached report.

3. A combination of reserves and borrowing will be used to fund acquisitions. Business case modelling will be developed using an opportunity cost of capital based on debt funded through Prudential Borrowing. The business case will be made on the basis of borrowing the full amount each time to ensure that resources are able to be recycled.

4. All assets will be acquired against a target hold period of 5 to 10 years with consideration given to asset management to enhance/protect value over the period of ownership (and any additional resource required/expected in this respect) and risks relating to disposal after the proposed hold period. A proportion of the income will be allocated for risk provision. Further returns would depend on investment performance relative to target and might be achieved through release of the risk provision and/or capital returns.

5. The financial position will be thoroughly monitored throughout the hold period and adequate response made to any change in market conditions and portfolio performance. Decisions regarding the funding of acquisitions will be made by the Executive Director of Resources/ s.151 officer and will be based on:
   - An analysis of disposal value risk after an assumed hold period

- The expectation that the asset will generate a capital return that tracks inflation or better with a provision for risk should this not be achieved

6. Access to suitably qualified/experienced resource is essential for successful delivery and management of the risks involved. Resources should be identified and ring-fenced to the activity. The property and asset team has been restructured to ensure that sufficient resources available to manage the existing assets and the new additions that would be acquired in line with this strategy.

4.8 Capital Investment Strategy

The Capital Investment Strategy forms a key part of the Council's overall Corporate Planning Framework. It provides a mechanism by which the Council's capital investment and financing decisions can be aligned with the Council's over-arching corporate priorities and objectives over a medium term (five year) planning horizon. The Strategy has direct links to the Treasury Management Strategy and it is therefore appropriate that the Governance and Audit Committee scrutinise and provide assurance to Council on both policies. **The Capital Investment Strategy is attached at Appendix H.**

5 APPENDICES to the Treasury Management Strategy

A Prudential and treasury indicators and MRP statement

B Interest rate forecasts

C Economic background

D Treasury management practice 1 – credit and counterparty risk management

E Approved countries for investments

F Treasury management scheme of delegation

G The treasury management role of the section 151 officer

H The Capital Investment Strategy

APPENDIX A

THE CAPITAL PRUDENTIAL AND TREASURY INDICATORS 2019/20 – 2022/23 AND MRP STATEMENT

The Council's capital expenditure plans are the key driver of treasury management activity. The output of the capital expenditure plans is reflected in the prudential indicators, which are designed to assist members' overview and confirm capital expenditure plans

Capital Expenditure

Capital Expenditure By Cluster £m	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Estimate	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate
Our People	1.258	1.850	1.301	0.694	0.595
Our Place	6.132	13.438	14.991	7.890	1.181
Our Council	0.195	0.332	0.826	0.300	0.485
Investment	13.494	7.015	7.000	0.000	0.000
Total	**21.079**	**22.655**	**24.118**	**8.883**	**2.261**

Minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy statement

The Council is required to pay off an element of the accumulated General Fund capital spend funded from borrowing (the CFR) each year through a revenue charge (the minimum revenue provision - MRP), although it is also allowed to undertake additional voluntary payments if required (voluntary revenue provision - VRP).

MHCLG regulations have been issued which require the full Council to approve **an MRP Statement** in advance of each year. A variety of options are provided to councils, so long as there is a prudent provision. The Council is recommended to approve the following MRP Statement;

From 1 April 2008 for all unsupported borrowing (including PFI and finance leases) the MRP policy will be*:*

- **Asset life method** – MRP will be charged, and therefore debt repaid over the expected useful life of the asset financed from borrowing based on the estimated life of the assets, in accordance with the regulations (this option must be applied for any expenditure capitalised under a Capitalisation Direction) (option 3);

- **Asset life method – Annuity Method**
  Under this approach the debt is repaid over the expected useful life of the asset financed from borrowing. For, regeneration schemes or administrative projects, where revenue benefits are only realised in future years or increase in future years, and will be based on an appropriate rate.

- **Loan Principal repayment as proxy for MRP**

The council considers that where borrowing has funded loan advances, the loan principal repaid (or in the event of default the realisation of security) as a capital receipt will be utilised to repay the borrowing and therefore negates the requirement to set aside an annual MRP charge.

- **Borrowing for Non-Treasury Investments**
  Where the Council borrows and anticipates a capital receipt will be realised within the short/medium term, ie for the acquisition of Commercial Investment Properties funded from borrowing, where the asset is to be held for a set period, and a capital receipt is expected to be realised at the end of this period, then the requirement to set aside a MRP to repay the debt will be considered on a case by case basis and in such cases, and with the agreement of the Auditor, MRP may not be applied subject to taking into account any risks, project profiles and revenue income streams from the investment.

  This is considered a prudent charge as the assets will be held for medium term period and the debt will be repaid upon sale of the asset.

  To mitigate the risk of loss of capital upon sale of any Commercial Investment Property, should the capital receipt not meeting outstanding debt, a Valuation Volatility Reserve has been created to fund any shortfall.

- **Finance Leases**
  Repayment of principal included in finance lease repayments are applied as MRP**.**

Voluntary MRP Overpayments – The Council has the ability to repay additional amounts for MRP as voluntary contributions as it considers appropriate.

These options provide for a reduction in the borrowing need over approximately the asset’s life.

Affordability prudential indicators

The previous sections cover the overall capital and control of borrowing prudential indicators, but within this framework prudential indicators are required to assess the affordability of the capital investment plans. These provide an indication of the impact of the capital investment plans on the Council’s overall finances. The Council is asked to approve the following indicators:

a. Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream

This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income) against the net revenue stream.

%	2019/20 Estimate	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate
Net Revenue Expenditure £m	**14.783**	**14.357**	**13.816**	**14.055**
Interest Payable £m	0.391	1.263	1.296	1.326
Interest Receivable (-) £m	-0.234	-0.250	-0.125	-0.087
MRP £m	0.110	0.264	0.550	1.372
Capital Financing Charges	**0.267**	**1.277**	**1.721**	**2.611**
Ratio	**1.81%**	**8.89%**	**12.46%**	**18.58%**

The estimates of financing costs include current commitments and the proposals in this budget report.

Interest receivable excludes interest from loans.

b. Incremental impact of capital investment decisions on council tax

This indicator identifies the revenue costs associated with proposed changes to the three year capital programme recommended in this budget report compared to the Council's existing approved commitments and current plans. The assumptions are based on the budget, but will invariably include some estimates, such as the level of Government support, which are not published over a three year period.

Incremental impact of capital investment decisions on the band D council tax

£	2019/20 Estimate	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate	2024/25 Estimate
Council tax - band D	-6.33	1.25	6.28	7.21	6.43	6.61

Treasury indicators for debt

There are three debt related treasury activity limits. The purpose of these are to restrain the activity of the treasury function within certain limits, thereby managing risk and reducing the impact of any adverse movement in interest rates. However, if these are set to be too restrictive they will impair the opportunities to reduce costs / improve performance. The indicators are:

- Upper limits on variable interest rate exposure. This identifies a maximum limit for variable interest rates based upon the debt position net of investments

- Upper limits on fixed interest rate exposure. This is similar to the previous indicator and covers a maximum limit on fixed interest rates;
- Maturity structure of borrowing. These gross limits are set to reduce the Council's exposure to large fixed rate sums falling due for refinancing, and are required for upper and lower limits. The Council is asked to approve the following treasury indicators and limits:

£m	**2020/21**	**2021/22**	**2022/23**
Interest rate exposures			
	Upper	**Upper**	**Upper**
Limits on fixed interest rates: • **Debt only** • **Investments only**	 100% 75%	 100% 75%	 100% 75%
Limits on variable interest rates • **Debt only** • **Investments only**	 25% 100%	 25% 100%	 20% 100%
Maturity structure of fixed interest rate borrowing 2020/21			
		Lower	**Upper**
Under 12 months		0%	100%
12 months to 2 years		0%	100%
2 years to 5 years		0%	100%
5 years to 10 years		0%	100%
10 years to 20 years		0%	100%
20 years to 30 years		0%	100%
30 years to 40 years		0%	100%
40 years to 50 years		0%	50%
Maturity structure of variable interest rate borrowing 2020/21			
		Lower	Upper
Under 12 months		0%	100%
12 months to 2 years		0%	100%
2 years to 5 years		0%	0%
5 years to 10 years		0%	0%
10 years to 20 years		0%	0%
20 years to 30 years		0%	0%
30 years to 40 years		0%	0%
40 years to 50 years		0%	0%

APPENDIX B

Interest Rate Forecasts 2019-2022

The Council has appointed Link Asset Services 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 our central view.

Link Asset Services Interest Rate View	Dec-19	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23
Bank Rate View	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25
3 Month LIBID	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.10	1.20	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30
6 Month LIBID	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.10	1.10	1.20	1.30	1.40	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
12 Month LIBID	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.10	1.20	1.30	1.30	1.40	1.50	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70
5yr PWLB Rate	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.50	2.50	2.60	2.70	2.80	2.90	2.90	3.00	3.10	3.20	3.20
10yr PWLB Rate	2.60	2.70	2.70	2.70	2.80	2.90	3.00	3.10	3.20	3.20	3.30	3.30	3.40	3.50
25yr PWLB Rate	3.20	3.30	3.40	3.40	3.50	3.60	3.70	3.70	3.80	3.90	4.00	4.00	4.10	4.10
50yr PWLB Rate	3.10	3.20	3.30	3.30	3.40	3.50	3.60	3.60	3.70	3.80	3.90	3.90	4.00	4.00

The above forecasts have been based on an assumption that there is an agreed deal on Brexit, including agreement on the terms of trade between the UK and EU, at some point in time. The result of the general election has removed much uncertainty around this major assumption. However, it does not remove uncertainty around whether agreement can be reached with the EU on a trade deal within the short time to December 2020, as the prime minister has pledged.

It has been little surprise that the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has left Bank Rate unchanged at 0.75% so far in 2019 due to the ongoing uncertainty over Brexit and the outcome of the general election. In its meeting on 7 November, the MPC became more dovish due to increased concerns over the outlook for the domestic economy if Brexit uncertainties were to become more entrenched, and for weak global economic growth: if those uncertainties were to materialise, then the MPC were likely to cut Bank Rate. However, if they were both to dissipate, then rates would need to rise at a “gradual pace and to a limited extent”. Brexit uncertainty has had a dampening effect on UK GDP growth in 2019, especially around mid-year. There is still some residual risk that the MPC could cut Bank Rate as the UK economy is still likely to only grow weakly in 2020 due to continuing uncertainty over whether there could effectively be a no deal Brexit in December 2020 if agreement on a trade deal is not reached with the EU. Until that major uncertainty is removed, or the period for agreeing a deal is extended, it is unlikely that the MPC would raise Bank Rate.

Bond yields / PWLB rates. There has been much speculation during 2019 that the bond market has gone into a bubble, as evidenced by high bond prices and remarkably low yields. However, given the context that there have been heightened expectations that the US was heading for a recession in 2020, and a general background of a downturn in world economic growth, together with inflation generally at low levels in most countries and expected to remain subdued, conditions are ripe for low bond yields. While inflation targeting by the major central banks has been successful over the last thirty years in lowering inflation expectations, the real equilibrium rate for central rates has fallen considerably due to the high level of borrowing by consumers: this means that central banks do not need to raise rates as much now to have a major impact on consumer spending, inflation, etc. This has pulled down the overall level of interest rates and bond yields in financial markets over the last thirty years. We have therefore seen over the last year, many bond yields up to ten years in the Eurozone actually turn negative. In addition, there has, at times, been an inversion of bond yields in the US whereby ten-year yields have fallen below shorter-term yields. In the past, this has been a precursor of a recession. The other side of this coin is that bond prices are elevated, as investors would be expected to be moving out of riskier assets i.e. shares, in anticipation of a downturn in corporate earnings and so selling out of equities. However, stock markets are also currently at high levels as some investors have focused on chasing returns in the context of dismal ultra-low interest rates on cash deposits.

During the first half of 2019-20 to 30 September, gilt yields plunged and caused a near halving of longer term PWLB rates to completely unprecedented historic low levels. *(See paragraph 3.7 for comments on the increase in the PWLB rates margin over gilt yields of 100bps introduced on 9.10.19.)* There is though, an expectation that financial markets have gone too far in their fears about the degree of the downturn in US and world growth. If, as expected, the US only suffers a mild downturn in growth, bond markets in the US are likely to sell off and that would be expected to put upward pressure on bond yields, not only in the US, but also in the UK due to a correlation between US treasuries and UK gilts; at various times this correlation has been strong but at other times weak. However, forecasting the timing of this, and how strong the correlation is likely to be, is very difficult to forecast with any degree of confidence. Changes in UK Bank Rate will also impact on gilt yields.

One potential danger that may be lurking in investor minds is that Japan has become mired in a twenty-year bog of failing to get economic growth and inflation up off the floor, despite a combination of massive monetary and fiscal stimulus by both the central bank and government. Investors could be fretting that this condition might become contagious to other western economies.

Another danger is that unconventional monetary policy post 2008, (ultra-low interest rates plus quantitative easing), may end up doing more harm than good through prolonged use. Low interest rates have encouraged a debt-fuelled boom that now makes it harder for central banks to raise interest rates. Negative interest rates could damage the profitability of commercial banks and so impair their ability to lend and / or push them into riskier lending. Banks could also end up holding large amounts of their government's bonds and so create a potential doom loop. (A doom loop would occur where the credit rating of the debt of a nation was downgraded which would cause bond prices to fall, causing losses on debt portfolios held by banks and insurers, so reducing their capital and forcing them to sell bonds – which, in turn, would cause further falls in their prices etc.). In addition, the financial viability of pension funds could be damaged by low yields on holdings of bonds.

The overall longer run future trend is for gilt yields, and consequently PWLB rates, to rise, albeit gently. From time to time, gilt yields, and therefore PWLB rates, can be subject to exceptional levels of volatility due to geo-political, sovereign debt crisis, emerging market developments and sharp changes in investor sentiment. Such volatility could occur at any time during the forecast period.

In addition, PWLB rates are subject to ad hoc decisions by **H.M. Treasury** to change the margin over gilt yields charged in PWLB rates: such changes could be up or down. It is not clear that if gilt yields were to rise back up again by over 100bps within the next year or so, whether H M Treasury would remove the extra 100 bps margin implemented on 9.10.19.

Economic and interest rate forecasting remains difficult with so many influences weighing on UK gilt yields and PWLB rates. The above forecasts, (and MPC decisions), will be liable to further amendment depending on how economic data and developments in financial markets transpire over the next year. Geopolitical developments, especially in the EU, could also have a major impact. Forecasts for average investment earnings beyond the three-year time horizon will be heavily dependent on economic and political developments.

APPENDIX C

ECONOMIC BACKGROUND (as at 5 February 2019)

Commentary by Link Asset Services

UK. Brexit. 2019 was a year of upheaval on the political front as Theresa May resigned as Prime Minister to be replaced by Boris Johnson on a platform of the UK leaving the EU on 31 October 2019, with or without a deal. However, MPs blocked leaving on that date and the EU agreed an extension to 31 January 2020. In late October, MPs approved an outline of a Brexit deal to enable the UK to leave the EU on 31 January. The Conservative Government gained a large overall majority in the **general election** on 12 December; this ensured that the UK left the EU on 31 January. However, there will still be much uncertainty as the detail of a comprehensive trade deal will need to be negotiated by the current end of the transition period in December 2020, which the Prime Minister has pledged he will not extend. This could prove to be an unrealistically short timetable for such major negotiations that leaves open three possibilities; a partial agreement on many areas of agreement and then continuing negotiations to deal with the residual areas, the need for the target date to be put back, probably two years, or, a no deal Brexit in December 2020.

GDP growth took a big hit from both political and Brexit uncertainty during 2019; quarter three 2019 surprised on the upside by coming in at +0.4% q/q, +1.1% y/y. However, the peak of Brexit uncertainty during the final quarter appears to have suppressed quarterly growth to probably around zero. The forward-looking surveys in January have indicated that there could be a significant recovery of growth now that much uncertainty has gone. Nevertheless, economic growth may only come in at about 1% in 2020, pending the outcome of negotiations on a trade deal. Provided there is a satisfactory resolution of those negotiations, which are in both the EU's and UK's interest, then growth should strengthen further in 2021.

At its 30 January meeting, the Monetary Policy Committee held Bank Rate unchanged at 0.75%. The vote was again split 7-2, with two votes for a cut to 0.50%. The financial markets had been predicting a 50:50 chance of a rate cut at the time of the meeting. Admittedly, there had been plenty of downbeat UK economic news in December and January which showed that all the political uncertainty leading up to the general election, together with uncertainty over where Brexit would be going after the election, had depressed economic growth in quarter 4. In addition, three members of the MPC had made speeches in January which were distinctly on the dovish side, flagging up their concerns over weak growth and low inflation; as there were two other members of the MPC who voted for a rate cut in November, five would be a majority at the January MPC meeting if those three followed through on their concerns.
However, that downbeat news was backward looking; more recent economic statistics and forward-looking business surveys, have all pointed in the direction of a robust bounce in economic activity and a recovery of confidence after the decisive result of the general election removed political and immediate Brexit uncertainty. In addition, the September spending round increases in expenditure will start kicking in from April 2020, while the Budget in March is widely expected to include a substantial fiscal boost by further increases in expenditure, especially on infrastructure. The Bank of England cut its forecasts for growth from 1.2% to 0.8% for 2020, and from 1.8% to 1.4% for 2021. However, these forecasts could not include any allowance for the predicted fiscal boost in the March Budget. Overall, the MPC clearly decided to focus on the more recent forward-looking news than the earlier downbeat news.

The quarterly Monetary Policy Report did, though, flag up that there was still a risk of a Bank Rate cut; "Policy may need to reinforce the expected recovery in UK GDP growth should the more positive signals from recent indicators of global and domestic activity not be sustained or should indicators of domestic prices remain relatively weak." Obviously, if trade negotiations with the EU failed to make satisfactory progress, this could dampen confidence and growth. On the other hand, there was also a warning in the other direction, that if growth were to pick up strongly, as suggested by recent business surveys, then "some modest tightening" of policy might be needed further ahead. It was therefore notable that the Bank had dropped its phrase that tightening would be "limited and gradual", a long-standing piece of forward guidance; this gives the MPC more room to raise Bank Rate more quickly if growth was to surge and, in turn, lead to a surge in inflation above the 2% target rate.

As for **inflation** itself, CPI has been hovering around the Bank of England's target of 2% during 2019, but fell again in both October and November to a three-year low of 1.5% and then even further to 1.3% in December. It is likely to remain close to or under 2% over the next two years and so, it does not pose any immediate concern to the MPC at the current time. However, if there was a hard or no deal Brexit, inflation could rise towards 4%, primarily because of imported inflation on the back of a weakening pound.

With regard to the **labour market,** growth in numbers employed has been quite resilient through 2019 until the three months to September, where it fell by 58,000. However, there was an encouraging pick up again in the three months to October to growth of 24,000 and then a stunning increase of 208,000 in the three months to November. The unemployment rate held steady at a 44-year low of 3.8% on the Independent Labour Organisation measure. Wage inflation has been steadily falling from a high point of 3.9% in July to 3.4% in November (3-month average regular pay, excluding bonuses). This meant that in real terms, (i.e. wage rates higher than CPI inflation), earnings grew by about 2.1%. As the UK economy is very much services sector driven, an increase in household spending power is likely to feed through into providing some support to the overall rate of economic growth in the coming months. The other message from the fall in wage growth is that employers are beginning to find it easier to hire suitable staff, indicating that supply pressure in the labour market is easing.

Coronavirus. The recent Coronavirus outbreak could cause disruption to the economies of affected nations. The Chinese economy is now very much bigger than it was at the time of the SARS outbreak in 2003 and far more integrated into world supply chains. However, a temporary dip in Chinese growth could lead to a catch up of lost production in following quarters with minimal net overall effect over a period of a year. However, no one knows quite how big an impact this virus will have around the world; hopefully, the efforts of the WHO and the Chinese authorities will ensure that the current level of infection does not multiply greatly.

USA. After growth of 2.9% y/y in 2018 fuelled by President Trump's massive easing of fiscal policy, growth has weakened in 2019. After a strong start in quarter 1 at 3.1%, (annualised rate), it fell to 2.0% in quarter 2 and then 2.1% in quarters 3 and 4. This left the rate for 2019 as a whole at 2.3%, a slowdown from 2018 but not the precursor of a recession which financial markets had been fearing earlier in the year. Forward indicators are currently indicating that growth is likely to strengthen somewhat moving forward into 2020.

The Fed finished its series of increases in rates to 2.25 – 2.50% in December 2018. In July 2019, it cut rates by 0.25% as a 'midterm adjustment'. It also ended its programme of quantitative tightening in August 2019, (reducing its holdings of treasuries etc.). It then cut rates by 0.25% again in September and by another 0.25% in its October meeting to 1.50 – 1.75%. It left rates unchanged at its December meeting. Rates were again left unchanged at its end of January meeting although it had been thought that as the yield curve on Treasuries had been close to inverting again, (with 10 year yields nearly falling below 2 year yields - this is often viewed as being a potential indicator of impending recession), that the Fed could have cut rates, especially in view of the threat posed by the coronavirus. However, it acknowledged that coronavirus was a threat of economic disruption but was not serious at the current time for the USA. In addition, the phase 1 trade deal with China is supportive of growth. The Fed though, does have an issue that despite reasonably strong growth rates, its inflation rate has stubbornly refused to rise to its preferred core inflation target of 2%; it came in at 1.6% in December. It is therefore unlikely to be raising rates in the near term. It is also committed to reviewing its approach to monetary policy by midyear 2020; this may include a move to inflation targeting becoming an average figure of 2% so as to allow more flexibility for inflation to under and over shoot.

"The NEW NORMAL." The Fed chairman has given an overview of the current big picture of the economy by summing it up as **A NEW NORMAL OF LOW INTEREST RATES, LOW INFLATION AND PROBABLY LOWER GROWTH.** This is indeed an affliction that has mired Japan for the last two decades despite strenuous efforts to stimulate growth and inflation by copious amounts of fiscal stimulus and cutting rates to zero. China and the EU are currently facing the same difficulty to trying to get inflation and growth up. Our own MPC may well have growing concerns and one MPC member specifically warned on the potential for a low inflation trap in January.
It is also worth noting that no less than a quarter of total world sovereign debt is now yielding negative returns.

EUROZONE. Growth has been slowing from +1.8 % during 2018 to nearly half of that in 2019. Growth was +0.4% q/q in quarter 1, +0.2% q/q in quarters 2 and 3; it then fell to +0.1% in quarter 4 for a total overall growth rate of only 1.0% in 2019. Recovery from quarter 4 is expected to be slow and gradual. German GDP growth has been struggling to stay in positive territory in 2019 and grew by only 0.6% in 2019, with quarter 4 potentially being a negative number. Germany would be particularly vulnerable to a no deal Brexit depressing exports further and if President Trump imposes tariffs on EU produced cars.

The European Central Bank (ECB) ended its programme of quantitative easing purchases of debt in December 2018, which then meant that the central banks in the US, UK and EU had all ended the phase of post financial crisis expansion of liquidity supporting world financial markets by quantitative easing purchases of debt. However, the downturn in EZ growth in the second half of 2018 and in 2019, together with inflation falling well under the upper limit of its target range of 0 to 2%, (but it aims to keep it near to 2%), has prompted the ECB to take new measures to stimulate growth. At its March 2019 meeting, it said that it expected to leave interest rates at their present levels "at least through to the end of 2019", but that was of little help to boosting growth in the near term. Consequently, it announced a **third round of TLTROs**; this provides banks with cheap borrowing every three months from September 2019 until March 2021 that means that, although they would have only a two-year maturity, the Bank was making funds available until 2023, two years later than under its previous policy. As with the last round, the new TLTROs will include an incentive to encourage bank lending, and they will be capped at 30% of a bank's eligible loans. However, since then, the downturn in EZ and world growth has gathered momentum; at its meeting on 12 September, it cut its deposit rate further into negative territory, from -0.4% to -0.5%, and announced a **resumption of quantitative easing purchases of debt for an unlimited period.** At its October meeting it said these purchases would start in November at €20bn per month - a relatively small amount compared to the previous buying programme. It also increased the maturity of the third round of TLTROs from two to three years. However, it is doubtful whether this loosening of monetary policy will have much impact on growth and, unsurprisingly, the ECB stated that governments would need to help stimulate growth by 'growth friendly' fiscal policy. There have been no changes in rates or monetary policy since October. In January, the ECB warned

that the economic outlook was ‘tilted to the downside’ and repeated previous requests for governments to do more to stimulate growth by increasing national spending. The new President of the ECB, Christine Lagarde who took over in December, also stated that a year long review of monetary policy, including the price stability target, would be conducted by the ECB
On the political front, Austria, Spain and Italy have been in the throes of **forming coalition governments** with some unlikely combinations of parties i.e. this raises questions around their likely endurance. The most recent results of German state elections has put further pressure on the frail German CDU/SDP coalition government and on the current leadership of the CDU.

CHINA. Economic growth has been weakening over successive years, despite repeated rounds of central bank stimulus; medium term risks are increasing. Major progress still needs to be made to eliminate excess industrial capacity and the stock of unsold property, and to address the level of non-performing loans in the banking and shadow banking systems. In addition, there still needs to be a greater switch from investment in industrial capacity, property construction and infrastructure to consumer goods production.

JAPAN - has been struggling to stimulate consistent significant GDP growth and to get inflation up to its target of 2%, despite huge monetary and fiscal stimulus. It is also making little progress on fundamental reform of the economy.

WORLD GROWTH. Until recent years, world growth has been boosted by increasing **globalisation** i.e. countries specialising in producing goods and commodities in which they have an economic advantage and which they then trade with the rest of the world. This has boosted worldwide productivity and growth, and, by lowering costs, has also depressed inflation. However, the rise of China as an economic superpower over the last thirty years, which now accounts for nearly 20% of total world GDP, has unbalanced the world economy. The Chinese government has targeted achieving major world positions in specific key sectors and products, especially high tech areas and production of rare earth minerals used in high tech products. It is achieving this by massive financial support, (i.e. subsidies), to state owned firms, government directions to other firms, technology theft, restrictions on market access by foreign firms and informal targets for the domestic market share of Chinese producers in the selected sectors. This is regarded as being unfair competition that is putting western firms at an unfair disadvantage or even putting some out of business. It is also regarded with suspicion on the political front as China is an authoritarian country that is not averse to using economic and military power for political advantage. The current trade war between the US and China therefore needs to be seen against that backdrop. It is, therefore, likely that we are heading into a period where there will be a **reversal of world globalisation and a decoupling of western countries** from dependence on China to supply products. This is likely to produce a backdrop in the coming years of weak global growth and so weak inflation. **Central banks are, therefore, likely to come under more pressure to support growth by looser monetary policy measures and this will militate against central banks increasing interest rates**.

The trade war between the US and China is a major concern to **financial markets** due to the synchronised general weakening of growth in the major economies of the world, compounded by fears that there could even be a recession looming up in the US, though this is probably overblown. These concerns resulted in **government bond yields** in the developed world falling significantly during 2019. If there were a major worldwide downturn in growth, central banks in most of the major economies will have limited ammunition available, in terms of monetary policy measures, when rates are already very low in most countries, (apart from the US). There are also concerns about how much distortion of financial markets has already occurred with the current levels of quantitative easing purchases of debt by central banks and the use of negative central bank rates in some countries.

INTEREST RATE FORECASTS

The interest rate forecasts provided by Link Asset Services in paragraph 3.3 are **predicated on an assumption of an agreement being reached on Brexit between the UK and the EU.** On this basis, while GDP growth is likely to be subdued in 2019 and 2020 due to all the uncertainties around Brexit depressing consumer and business confidence, an agreement on the detailed terms of a trade deal is likely to lead to a boost to the rate of growth in subsequent years. This could, in turn, increase inflationary pressures in the economy and so cause the Bank of England to resume a series of gentle increases in Bank Rate. Just how fast, and how far, those increases will occur and rise to, will be data dependent. The forecasts in this report assume a modest recovery in the rate and timing of stronger growth and in the corresponding response by the Bank in raising rates.

- In the event of an **orderly non-agreement exit in December 2020**, it is likely that the Bank of England would take action to cut Bank Rate from 0.75% in order to help economic growth deal with the adverse effects of this situation. This is also likely to cause short to medium term gilt yields to fall.
- If there were a **disorderly Brexit**, then any cut in Bank Rate would be likely to last for a longer period and also depress short and medium gilt yields correspondingly. Quantitative easing could also be restarted by the Bank of England. It is also possible that the government could act to protect economic growth by implementing fiscal stimulus.

The balance of risks to the UK

- The overall balance of risks to economic growth in the UK is probably relatively even due to the weight of all the uncertainties over post-Brexit trade arrangements and the impact of an expansionary government spending policy (as expected in the Budget on 11th March).
- The balance of risks to increases or decreases in Bank Rate and shorter term PWLB rates are also broadly even.

One risk that is both an upside and downside risk, is that all central banks are now working in very different economic conditions than before the 2008 financial crash as there has been a major increase in consumer and other debt due to the exceptionally low levels of borrowing rates that have prevailed since 2008. This means that the neutral rate of interest in an economy, (i.e. the rate that is neither expansionary nor deflationary), is difficult to determine definitively in this new environment, although central banks have made statements that they expect it to be much lower than before 2008. Central banks could therefore either over or under do increases in central interest rates.

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

- **Post Brexit trade negotiations –** if it were to cause significant economic disruption and a major downturn in the rate of growth.
- **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.** In 2018, Italy was a major concern due to having a populist coalition government which made a lot of anti-austerity and anti-EU noise. However, in September 2019 there was a major change in the coalition governing Italy which has brought to power a much more EU friendly government; this has eased the pressure on Italian bonds. Only time will tell whether this new coalition based on an unlikely alliance of two very different parties will endure.
- Weak capitalisation of some **European banks**, particularly Italian banks.
- **German minority government.** 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 recent state elections but the SPD has done particularly badly and this has raised a major question mark over continuing to support the CDU. Angela Merkel has stepped down from being the CDU party leader but she intends to remain as Chancellor until 2021.
- **Other minority EU governments.** Austria, Finland, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands 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. There has also been rising anti-immigration sentiment in Germany and France.
- In October 2019, the IMF issued a report on the World Economic Outlook which flagged up a synchronised slowdown in world growth. However, it also flagged up that there was **potential for a rerun of the 2008 financial crisis**, but his time centred on the huge debt binge accumulated by corporations during the decade of low interest rates. This now means that there are corporates who would be unable to cover basic interest costs on **some $19trn of corporate debt in major western economies,** if world growth was to dip further than just a minor cooling. This debt is mainly held by the shadow banking sector i.e. pension funds, insurers, hedge funds, asset managers etc., who, when there is $15trn of corporate and government debt now yielding negative interest rates, have been searching for higher returns in riskier assets. Much of this debt is only marginally above investment grade so any rating downgrade could force some holders into a fire sale, which would then depress prices further and so set off a spiral down. The IMF's answer is to suggest imposing higher capital charges on lending to corporates and for central banks to regulate the investment operations of the shadow banking sector. In October 2019, the deputy Governor of the Bank of England also flagged up the dangers of banks and the shadow banking sector lending to corporates, especially highly leveraged corporates, which had risen back up to near pre-2008 levels.
- **Geopolitical risks,** for example in North Korea, but also in Europe and the Middle East, which could lead to increasing safe haven flows.

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

- **Brexit –** if a comprehensive agreement on a trade deal was reached that removed all threats of economic and political disruption between the EU and the UK.
- 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 later rapid series of increases in Bank Rate faster than we currently expect.
- **UK inflation,** whether domestically generated or imported, returning to sustained significantly higher levels causing an increase in the inflation premium inherent to gilt yields.

APPENDIX D TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRACTICE (TMP1) – CREDIT AND COUNTERPARTY RISK MANAGEMENT

The MHCLG issued Investment Guidance in 2018, and this forms the structure of the Council's policy below. These guidelines do not apply to either trust funds or pension funds which operate under a different regulatory regime.

The key intention of the Guidance is to maintain the current requirement for councils to invest prudently, and that priority is given to security and liquidity before yield. In order to facilitate this objective the guidance requires this Council to have regard to the CIPFA publication Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes. This Council adopted the code on 01/03/2010 and will apply its principles to all investment activity. In accordance with the Code, the Director of Finance has produced its treasury management practices (TMPs). This part, TMP 1 (1) covering investment counterparty policy requires approval each year.

Annual investment strategy – The key requirement of both the Code and investment guidance are to set an annual investment strategy, as part of its annual treasury strategy for the following year, covering the identification and approval of the following:

- The strategy guidelines for choosing and placing investments, particularly non-specified investments
- The principles to be used to determine the maximum periods for which funds can be committed.
- Specified investments that the Council will use. These are high security (i.e. high credit rating, although this is defined by the Council, and no guidelines are given), and high liquidity investments in sterling and with a maturity of no more than a year.
- Non-specified investments, clarifying the greater risk implications, identifying the general types of investment that may be used and a limit to the overall amount of various categories that can be held at any time.

The investment policy proposed for the Council is:

Strategy guidelines – The main strategy guidelines are contained in the body of the treasury strategy statement.

SPECIFIED INVESTMENTS: All such investments will be sterling denominated, with **maturities up to maximum of 1 year**, meeting the minimum 'high' quality criteria where applicable. These are considered low risk assets where the possibility of loss of principal or investment income is small. These would include sterling investments which would not be defined as capital expenditure with:

1) The UK Government (such as Debt Management Account deposit facility, UK Treasury Bills or a Gilt with less than one year to maturity).
2) Supranational bonds of less than one year's duration
3) A local authority, housing association, parish council or community council
4) Pooled investment vehicles (such as money market funds) that have been awarded a high credit rating by a credit rating agency. For category

4 this covers pooled investment vehicles, such as money market funds, rated AAA by Standard & Poors, Moody's and/or Fitch rating agencies

Within these bodies, and in accordance with the Code, the Council has set additional criteria to set the time and amount of monies which will be invested in these bodies. These criteria are set out in the main report.

NON-SPECIFIED INVESTMENTS: These are any investments which do not meet the specified investment criteria. The identification and rationale supporting the selection of these other investments and the maximum limits to be applied are set out below. Non specified investment would include any sterling investments with:

	Non Specified Investment Category	**Limit £**
A	**Gilt Edged Securities** with a maturity of greater than one year. These are Government Bonds and so provide the highest security of investment and the repayment of principal on maturity. Similar to category (a) above, the value of the bond may rise or fall before maturity and losses may accrue if the bond is sold before maturity.	£5m
B	**The Council's own banker** if it fails to meet the basic credit criteria. In this instance balances will be minimised as far as possible	£1m
C	**Any Bank or Building Society** that has a minimum long term credit rating of AA, for deposits with a maturity of greater than one year (including forward deals in excess of one year from inception to repayment).	£2m
D	Enhanced Money Market Funds AA rated	£2m
E	Corporate Bond Funds	£2m
F	Local Authority Property Asset Fund	£4m
G	Certificates of Deposit	£2m
H	Covered Bonds	£1m
I	Property Funds – The use of these instruments can be deemed to be capital expenditure, and as such will be an application (spending) of capital resources. This Authority will seek guidance on the status of any fund it may consider using	£4m

This Authority will seek further advice on the appropriateness and associated risks with investments in these categories.

The monitoring of investment counterparties – The credit rating of counterparties will be monitored regularly. The Council receives credit rating information (changes, rating watches and rating outlooks) from Link Asset Services as and when ratings change, and counterparties are checked promptly. On occasion ratings may be downgraded when an investment has already been made. The criteria used are such that a minor downgrading should not affect the full receipt of the principal and interest. Any counterparty failing to meet the criteria will be removed from the list immediately by the Director of Finance, and if required new counterparties which meet the criteria will be added to the list.

A variety of investment instruments will be used, subject to the credit quality of the institution, and depending on the type of investment made it will fall into one of the above categories.

Accounting treatment of investments. The accounting treatment may differ from the underlying cash transactions arising from investment decisions made by this Council. To ensure that the Council is protected from any adverse revenue impact, which may arise from these differences, we will review the accounting implications of new transactions before they are undertaken.

APPENDIX E

APPROVED COUNTRIES FOR INVESTMENTS (As at 23.12.2019)

This list is based on those countries which have sovereign ratings of AA- or higher, (we show the lowest rating from Fitch, Moody's and S&P) and also, (except - at the time of writing - for Hong Kong, Norway and Luxembourg), have banks operating in sterling markets which have credit ratings of green or above in the Link Asset Services credit worthiness service.

Based on lowest available rating

AAA

- Australia
- Canada
- Denmark
- Germany
- Luxembourg
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Singapore
- Sweden
- Switzerland

AA+

- Finland
- U.S.A.

AA

- Abu Dhabi (UAE)
- Hong Kong
- France
- U.K.

AA-

- Belgium
- Qatar

APPENDIX F

TREASURY MANAGEMENT SCHEME OF DELEGATION

(i) Full Council

- receiving and reviewing reports on treasury management policies, practices and activities;
- approval of annual Treasury Management Strategy and Mid Year Review Treasury Management Indicators.

(ii) Corporate Policy and Resources Committee

- approval of/amendments to the organisation's adopted clauses, treasury management policy statement and treasury management practices;
- approval of the division of responsibilities;
- receiving and reviewing regular monitoring reports and acting on recommendations;
- approving the selection of external service providers and agreeing terms of appointment.
- Mid Year Review of Treasury Management Indicators

(iii) Governance and Audit Committee

- review and scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy, policy and procedures and making recommendations to the full Council.

APPENDIX G

THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT ROLE OF THE SECTION 151 OFFICER

The S151 (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.
- preparation of a capital strategy to include capital expenditure, capital financing, non-financial investments and treasury management, with a long term timeframe
- ensuring that the capital strategy is prudent, sustainable, affordable and prudent in the long term and provides value for money
- ensuring that due diligence has been carried out on all treasury and non-financial investments and is in accordance with the risk appetite of the authority
- ensure that the authority has appropriate legal powers to undertake expenditure on non-financial assets and their financing
- ensuring the proportionality of all investments so that the authority does not undertake a level of investing which exposes the authority to an excessive level of risk compared to its financial resources
- ensuring that an adequate governance process is in place for the approval, monitoring and ongoing risk management of all non-financial investments and long term liabilities
- provision to members of a schedule of all non-treasury investments including material investments in subsidiaries, joint ventures, loans and financial guarantees
- ensuring that members are adequately informed and understand the risk exposures taken on by an authority
- ensuring that the authority has adequate expertise, either in house or externally provided, to carry out the above
- creation of Treasury Management Practices which specifically deal with how non treasury investments will be carried out and managed, to include the following*: -*
    - *Risk management (TMP1 and schedules), including investment and risk management criteria for any material non-treasury investment portfolios;*

- *Performance measurement and management (TMP2 and schedules), including methodology and criteria for assessing the performance and success of non-treasury investments;*

- *Decision making, governance and organisation (TMP5 and schedules), including a statement of the governance requirements for decision making in relation to non-treasury investments; and arrangements to ensure that appropriate professional due diligence is carried out to support decision making;*

- *Reporting and management information (TMP6 and schedules), including where and how often monitoring reports are taken;*

- *Training and qualifications (TMP10 and schedules), including how the relevant knowledge and skills in relation to non-treasury investments will be arranged.*

APPENDIX H

CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2020/21 – 2024/25

1. Introduction

The Council is required to approve a Capital Investment Strategy in accordance with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance In Local Authorities.

The Capital Investment Strategy provides a high level overview of how capital investment, capital financing and treasury management activity supports the provisions of services. It considers associated risks and how they are managed and ensures that future financial implications are identified to inform future years budgets and financial sustainability.
The Strategy forms part of the Council's overall Corporate Planning Framework. It provides a mechanism by which the Council's capital investment and financing decisions can be aligned with the Council's corporate priorities and objectives over a medium term (five year) planning horizon and ensures that the revenue implications of investments are both affordable and sustainable.
The strategy provides a framework for determining the relative importance of individual capital projects. It defines how the capital programme is to be formulated, and it identifies issues and options that influence revenue and capital spending, and sets out how the resources will be managed.

Key elements of the strategy;

- Ensures investments meet our Corporate Plan objectives
- Incorporates the requirements of the Asset Management Plan
- Enables the development of an Capital Investment Programme over the medium term (5 years)
- A framework which will identify priorities for the use of resources for investment.
- Decisions are based on sound business cases.
- Risks are identified and mitigated where possible
- Directly links to the Treasury Management Strategy ensuring an affordable and sustainable Capital Investment Programme in adherence to legislation and the Prudential Code.
- Informs the Medium Term Financial Plan by identifying the revenue impacts of investment decisions.
- Incorporates an annual review to ensure the programme still meets our priorities.
- Considers innovative solutions to funding.

2. Principles Supporting the Capital Investment Strategy

a) Strategy Principles

- The investment programme will support the Council's strategic priorities, therefore, the capital investment programme will link to all key strategic planning documents: specifically the Corporate Plan, Executive Business Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and the Asset Management Plan.

- Schemes within the programme will be prioritised on an authority wide basis and the process of assessing investments, against specific criteria, will optimise the benefit and relative importance of potential schemes.

- **Responsible Investing (RI)** - investing in opportunities that seek to generate both financial value and sustainable growth*,*

- **Socially responsible investing** (**SRI**), also known as sustainable, socially conscious, "green" or ethical investing, as well as any investment strategy which seeks to consider both financial return and social good.

b) Capital Investment Policy

The Capital Investment Strategy will be underpinned by a Land and Property Investment Policy. The policy ***does not describe detailed operational investment activity but does describe the framework, and principal [underlying] considerations, which the Council will follow when reviewing and subsequently agreeing investment opportunities.*** It is designed to support the goals and objectives as outlined in the Corporate Plan, the general objectives of a UK public sector service provider and the very specific aims; goals and aspirations of the Council members; executive officers and their teams.

c) Finance Principles

- The overarching principal is the commitment to achieve affordable capital investments over the longer term.

- To pursue all available external funding options and opportunities for leverage of external resources.

- Ensure evaluation for value for money investments by whole life costing (where applicable) and by having robust Business Cases with full financial modelling, and appropriate due diligence in estimates in order to inform the full financial implications

- To develop partnerships, including the pursuit of shared services, joint ventures and community arrangements, where appropriate, to achieve the Council's investment aspirations and value for money.

- Monitoring and evaluation of approved budgets will form part of the quarterly budget monitoring reports.
- Monitoring and evaluation of approved Programmes and projects will form part of Performance Management.
- Encourage community engagement by informing on priorities and consultation on proposals.
- To invest in non-treasury activities to support ongoing sustainability in the delivery of services.
- Regularly review Business Cases as schemes are developed and update financial models to inform future budget impacts.

d) Asset Management Principles

The Asset Management Policy ensures that;

- We will take all reasonable and practical steps to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of staff, visitors and contractors who use or visit our buildings, land or property and who use or are in contact with supporting asset infrastructure.
- We will ensure that all our buildings and land and property assets are fully compliant with current legal requirements, are fit for purpose and managed and maintained in accordance with best practice.
- We will ensure that infrastructure supporting our physical assets is safe and fully compliant with relevant legislative and regulatory requirements.
- All activity on our assets will be carried out in compliance with relevant legislative and statutory requirements.
- We will assess asset related risks and manage such risk in accordance with our corporate risk management policy or in accordance with procedures relevant to the specific asset, its use and function.
- We will retain and/or acquire physical assets which are appropriate to our business and function and dispose of those assets which are not fit for purpose or which cannot support our business or investment criteria.
- We shall continue to actively develop our asset management systems; processes and procedures in a way which is appropriate; efficient; transparent and sustainable and which supports the best management outcomes for our physical assets.

- We shall continue to train and develop staff across the asset management discipline and apply technology and innovation where practical.

- We shall seek continual improvement of our management capability and activities to ensure value for money for all stakeholders.

3. Capital Investment Priorities

The Council's proposed Capital Investment Programme 2019/20 will support the Corporate Plan's key themes;

- Our People – Health and Wellbeing, Leisure, Skills, Vulnerable Groups and Communities
- Our Place – Economic Growth, External Investment, Social Regeneration, Infrastructure, Enhanced Environment
- Our Council – Finances, Structures, Parternships, Policies, Governance

The Council's financial planning process ensures that the decisions about the allocation of capital and revenue resources are taken to achieve a corporate and consistent approach. The key corporate documents and relevant linkages with this strategy include;

The Corporate Plan – priorities for the medium term
The Medium Term Financial Plan - incorporates the Financial Strategy, revenue budget financial impacts of capital investment decisions.
The Reserves Strategy- prioritises the use of reserves for capital and revenue purposes.
The Treasury Management Strategy (including Investment Strategy) informs the affordability and sustainability of prudent investment decisions.
The Commercial Portfolio Strategy – informs how acquisitions of investment properties will be made on a risk based approach
The Value for Money Strategy – Ensuring VFM is achieved from investment decisions.
The Housing Strategy – Supporting housing growth and regeneration within the district.
The Land and Property Investment Strategy -
The Asset Management Policy – Investment needs of our own land and property holdings
Service Plans – Investment need for delivery of quality services

4. The Capital Investment Strategy Process

The strategic approach to revenue and capital investment decisions needs to be formalised to ensure that our resources are directed to the most appropriate schemes which both deliver our corporate priorities and which are based on sound business cases. Assessment and prioritisation of capital investments schemes are based on uniform criteria.

Therefore the Capital Investment Strategy Process has been developed which will ensure that prioritisation of investments are directed to deliver Corporate Objectives and delivery of the Executive Business Plan and Service Business Plans in addition to generating returns to support delivery of core services.

The process for includes:

- Review existing Capital Programme, timing, budget requirements etc.
- Annual review of existing Projects
- Asset Management Plan – detailed costs of required investment in property portfolio and property assets to be disposed.
- Review of asset replacement programmes
- Consideration of financing availability i.e. Earmarked Reserves, Grant funding, Capital Receipts and Prudential Borrowing
- Business Planning – identifying new schemes and projects for evaluation both capital and revenue.
- Evaluation of all proposed schemes against scoring matrix.
- Consider core service funding requirements and opportunities to invest in non-Treasury assets to generate returns

The final approved Capital Investment Programme and its financial implications, are included within the Medium Term Financial Plan, submitted to the Council annually in March for approval.

Fully costed and appraised business cases for each scheme will be presented to a relevant Board for consideration prior to any decision being made.

The Capital Programme consists of 4 levels of activity;

Pre-Stage 1 – Business Case in preparation
Stage 1 – Budget approved – requires full business case
Stage 2 – Business case approved in principal or awaiting funding
Stage 3 and Business as Usual (BAU) – Approved to spend and funding secured

The investment and the ongoing revenue implications of each scheme are ascertained from the financial implications and appraisals within the business case.

The Capital Investment Value is assessed against the capital definition, and deminimis limits (£10k).

Revenue Implications – include the impact on revenue budgets for running costs/additional staffing etc. and the impact of the cost of borrowing or loss of investment interest if capital receipts and revenue reserves are to be utilised

5. Governance of the Capital Investment Programme

In accordance with the Constitution and governance arrangements, the Council reviews its capital requirements and determines its Capital Programme within the framework of the MTFP and as part of the annual budget process. Resource constraints mean the Council continually needs to prioritise expenditure in light of its aims and priorities and considers alternative solutions.

To ensure that available resources are allocated optimally, capital programme planning is determined in parallel with service and revenue budget planning process within the frame work of the MTFP.

New programmes of expenditure will be appraised following a clearly defined Business Case gateway process.

The Council will approve in principal the Capital Investment Programme, and will approve the release of funding for replacement and renewal programmes, this is undertaken annually in March as part of budget setting and the approval of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Governance and Audit Committee will provide assurance on this Capital Investment Strategy.

Corporate Policy and Resources Committee will be responsible for approving release of funding for the Capital Investment Programme and will therefore receive reports for each scheme detailing the business case, cost, proposed funding and revenue implications.

Corporate Policy and Resources Committee will receive quarterly monitoring an update reports which may include details of;

- new capital investment schemes
- slippage in programme delivery
- programmes removed or reduced
- virements between schemes
- revisions in spend profile
- overspending
- capital acquisitions and disposals
- loan advances and outstanding loan balances

Progress on specific programmes will also be monitored in relation to projects through the Performance Monitoring reporting framework.

The Programme Board will receive monthly highlight reports

The Management Team will receive quarterly monitoring reports and any exception reporting.

Budget Managers will receive monthly monitoring reports.

6. Capital Financing

The funding of Capital schemes can come from a number of resources, the use of external resources will take precedent ;

- Prudential borrowing
- Revenue contributions and Earmarked Reserves
- Capital Receipts
- External grants and contributions (including S106 and Community Infrastructure Levies (CiL))
- Leasing
- Other sources – i.e. partnerships or private sector involvement

This strategy, the outcomes of which will inform the MTFP, is intended to consider all potential funding options available to the Council and to maximise the financial resources available for investment in corporate priorities and service provision and improvement.

To deliver our strategic objectives, especially in relation to economic and housing growth, regeneration, in addition to investment in commercial property which is designed to provide a revenue return, significant levels of investment will be required, which will result in a borrowing need.

Prudential Borrowing

The Council has discretion to undertake Prudential borrowing to fund capital projects with the full cost of that borrowing (interest and minimum revenue provision) being funded from Council revenue resources and/or capital receipts. This discretion is subject to complying with the Code's regulatory framework which essentially requires any such borrowing to be prudent, affordable and sustainable. Prudential borrowing provides an option for funding additional capital development however it has to be funded each year from within the revenue budget and by generating additional ongoing income streams from the investment.

Given the pressure on the Council's revenue budget in future years, prudent use will be made of this discretion in cases and only where there is a clear financial benefit, such as "invest to save", "invest to earn". Consideration will only be given to commercial investments where returns are expected to be higher than the revenue costs of the debt, provision of loans where principal repayments will be utilised as proxy for MRP, borrowing or major regeneration schemes which do not increase revenue expenditure levels in the longer term but provide a beneficial economic and or social impact.

The Council will remain cautious and prudent in the extent of prudential borrowing undertaken to fund new capital investment.

Where prudential borrowing is utilised to fund Capital Investment, financial implication considerations will be provided including the risks and opportunities of the investment over both the payback period and over the repayment period of any debt taken out.

Revenue Contributions and Earmarked Reserves

Our continued prudent approach is to set aside revenue resources to fund capital replacement programmes and asset management funding.

New Homes Bonus Grant will continue to be set aside for the purpose of investment in growth and regeneration (economic and housing) and this strategy has been included in the MTFP.

We will consider future Earmarking of Reserves for service investment needs, invest to save and invest to earn projects and enhancements to our own property assets, in addition to consideration of revenue contingencies, volatility and budget smoothing.

Our own resources will therefore be utilised to fund those schemes which provide a SRI, invest to save schemes which achieve efficiencies, and investment in our operational service asset needs.

Capital Receipts

Capital receipts generated from the following sources and where appropriate utilised as detailed.

- Loans principal repayments – used to repay prudential borrowing
- Receipts from Asset Disposal (operational property assets or surplus land)
- Commercial Portfolio Properties – repayment of borrowing
- Share of RTB Housing Transfer Agreement – future investment
- Insurance settlements – replacement of asset

External Grants and contributions (incl S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CiL))

The Council will actively pursue grants and contributions and other innovative solutions to funding of capital investment schemes. This funding will be utilised in the first instance.

Leasing

The use of leasing will be undertaken where alternative funding is not available for vehicles or minor equipment and the revenue budget does not allow for a full capital repayment. Where there is a robust business case then the option of leasing may be considered.

Other Sources of Funding

There are a range of other potential funding sources which may be generated locally either by the Council itself or in partnership with others ie a growing number of private organisations are showing interest where clear joint benefits exist. Each case will be subject to specific financial appraisals and appropriate governance arrangements.

7. Investment in Commercial Properties (Non Treasury Investments)

Any acquisition of Commercial Properties will be in accordance with the Commercial Portfolio Strategy and are being acquired to support delivery of services in a financially sustainable organisation. Up to £30m has been approved for investment in Commercial Property in support and protection of Council Services.

Appropriate experts are engaged as required.

All assets will be assessed against a set criteria and the Executive Director of Resources and Chair of Corporate Policy and Resources will have delegated Authority to complete on the acquisition of assets which score 50 or more out of 70. Any asset which falls below this threshold or registers a zero against any criteria may still be considered but specific justification will need to be provided and the decision to proceed taken to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

An annual review will be undertaken of the Commercial Property Portfolio to ascertain whether its fair value is sufficient to provide security against loss against the capital investment, and therefore adequate to meet the cost of outstanding borrowing.

Under the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy, there will be no annual MRP charge for borrowing undertaken to finance Commercial Properties. However voluntary MRP will be considered if appropriate.

A Valuation Volatility Earmarked Reserve has been created with a target balance of 5% of purchase price of the portfolio. This will help mitigate any financial loss of investment upon the sale of an asset should there be any shortfall against outstanding debt. A proportion of the annual revenue income generated from the investment will be allocated for risk provision.

A Commercial Contingency revenue base budget is also included within the MTFP to mitigate the risk of not achieving the desired level of yield from the Portfolio in year.

These investment assets are not deemed to be liquid over the short term but are likely to be held for the medium term of 5-10 years.

A number of prudential indicators in relation to these investments are contained within the Treasury Management Strategy and will be monitored throughout the year.

8. Risk

All capital projects have a risk register, with all risks affecting the project considered.
A specific risk of capital investment is the impact on the Council's VAT partial exemption (recovery of exempt VAT upto 5% of overall VAT). If exempt VAT exceeds 5% the whole amount is then irrecoverable. Each scheme is therefore assessed for its impact

9. Conclusion

The Capital Investment Strategy is a working document, which enables the Council to make informed rational capital investment decisions to achieve its corporate priorities and objectives. It provides a framework for determining the relative importance of individual projects.

The strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains relevant and effective.