

Capital Strategy & Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23

Contents

1. [Introduction](#)

[2022/23 Capital Strategy](#)

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [The Prudential Code](#)
3. [Property asset management](#)
4. [Infrastructure asset management](#)
5. [Investments for Service purposes](#)
6. [Commercial activities](#)
7. [Other assets](#)
8. [Capital financing & the Capital financing requirement](#)
9. [Capital disposals & receipts](#)
10. [Setting capital budgets](#)
11. [Revenue budget implications](#)
12. [Treasury management](#)
13. [Borrowing strategy](#)
14. [Investment strategy](#)
15. [Risk](#)
16. [Knowledge & skills](#)

[2022/23 Treasury Management Strategy](#)

1. [Economic background and forecasts for interest rates](#)
2. [Existing treasury position](#)
3. [Borrowing](#)
4. [Treasury investments](#)
5. [Related matters](#)
6. [Additional requirements of Welsh Government Investment Guidance](#)
7. [Advisors Economic & Interest Rate Forecast](#)
8. [Glossary of treasury terms](#)

Treasury & Capital Strategy

- 1.1. Treasury management is the management of the Authority's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The Authority has borrowed and invested substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risks are therefore central to the Authority's prudent financial management.
- 1.2. Treasury risk management at the Authority is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017 Edition (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Authority to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. In addition, the Welsh Government (WG) issued revised Guidance on Local Authority Investments in November 2019 that requires the Authority to approve an investment strategy before the start of each financial year. This report fulfils the Authority's legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to both the CIPFA Code and the WG Guidance.
- 1.3. This Council regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for the organisation, and any financial instruments entered into to manage these risks.
- 1.4. This Council acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management.
- 1.5. This Capital strategy gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.
- 1.6. Decisions made now on capital and treasury management will have financial consequences for the Authority for many years into the future. They are therefore subject to both a national regulatory framework and to local policy framework, summarised in this report.
- 1.7. The Council's borrowing driven by investment decisions based on its Capital strategy will be affordable, sustainable and prudent and consideration will be given to the management of interest rate risk, refinancing risk and budgetary risk. The source from which the borrowing is taken and the type of borrowing should allow the Council transparency and control over its debt.

- 1.8. The Council's primary objective in relation to investments remains the security of capital. The liquidity or accessibility of the Authority's investments followed by the yield earned on investments remain important but are secondary considerations.

2. Governance & reporting

- 2.1. Council delegates responsibility for the monitoring and scrutiny of its treasury management policy, strategy and practices to the Governance & Audit Committee and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions to the Section 151 officer or deputy, who will act in accordance with the policy and strategy and follow CIPFA's Standard of Professional Practice on Treasury Management.
- 2.2. The responsibility to approve the Capital strategy and the annual Treasury management strategy (including the investment strategy and MRP policy statement) remains with full Council.
- 2.3. Responsibility for treasury decisions ultimately remains with the Council, however the Council recognises the value in the use of treasury advisors to support the management of risk and to access specialist skills and resources. Support provided by its current advisors Arlingclose Limited includes advice on timing of decision making, training, credit updates, economic forecasts, research, articles and advice on capital finance.
- 2.4. Revised strategy: In accordance with the WG Guidance, full Council would be asked to approve a revised Treasury Management Strategy should the assumptions on which this report is based change significantly. Such circumstances would include, for example, a large unexpected change in interest rates, in the Authority's capital programme or in the level of its investment balance, or a material loss in the fair value of a non-financial investment identified as part of the year end accounts preparation and audit process.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Capital strategy gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.
- 1.2. Decisions made now on capital and treasury management will have financial consequences for the Authority for many years into the future. They are therefore subject to both a national regulatory framework and to local policy framework, summarised in this report.
- 1.3. It highlights that in the current climate of financial constraints and a continued Medium Term Financial Projection (MTFP) revenue budget gap, that expenditure on capital needs to remain within affordable limits. Demand for capital resources remains high and therefore inevitably, prioritisation of projects, leveraging in other sources of funding and working with partners remain key to meeting this demand.
- 1.4. The strategy highlights the key risks and considerations:
 - Capital expenditure plans for the Council need to be affordable, prudent and sustainable.
 - The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan includes the revenue costs for the financing of the current capital programme to 2025/26. This will exclude any borrowing for schemes which are self-financing over the life of the project.
 - If the level of capital expenditure funded by borrowing is required to be increased from that approved in the current programme it would need to be sanctioned by full Council.
 - Useable capital receipts provide a limited one-off resource to support financing of the capital programme. In recent years the Council has also made use of Welsh Government's guidance allowing flexible use of capital receipts to meet one-off costs associated with service reform. The Council has needed to make use of this flexibility in 2019/20, 2020/21 & 2021/22 and plans to do similarly in 2022/23 and over the remaining three years of the MTFP. Useable capital receipts are forecast to reduce to £7.2m by the end of 2025/26 based on the capital MTFP. The continued use of capital receipts for this purpose is recognized as a necessary but unsustainable approach and has the added consequence of requiring the Council to fund any further and future capital investment through prudential borrowing where it cannot be met from other sources.
 - As per the agreed framework (detailed in the report) the current programme needs to be maintained within the agreed limits, therefore not putting additional pressure on the capital financing budgets that have been included in the 2022/23 revenue budget.

- Within the context of significant demands for capital resources and limited availability, there is the need to develop our use of the various strategic plans across the organisation which drive the need for capital investment and develop alternative strategies to meet demand so the Councils own capital programme is prioritised within an affordable framework. This will include clearer and corporate visibility and assessment of demand for schools, highways and other operational assets.
- Approval of capital expenditure funded through borrowing locks the Council into committing revenue funding over a very long period (as long as 60 years). With Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) budgets increasing over the medium-term, the Authority needs to ensure its capital plans remain affordable and sustainable.
- The prudential indicators, including borrowing limits, are in line with the final budget proposals presented to Cabinet and Council in March 2022.

1.5. The strategy will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis alongside the Treasury Management Strategy given both strategies are intrinsically linked.

2. The Prudential Code

2.1. The objective of the Prudential Code is to ensure, within a clear framework, that the capital expenditure plans of local authorities are:

- **AFFORDABLE** - Total capital investment of the authority remains within sustainable limits. A local authority is required to consider the resources currently available to it and those estimated to be available in the future, together with the totality of its capital plans and income and expenditure forecasts in assessing affordability.
- **PRUDENT** – The full Council set an authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt, these need to be consistent with the authority's plans for affordable capital expenditure and financing, and with its treasury management policy statement and practices. Authorities should consider a balance between **security, liquidity and yield** which reflects their own risk appetite but which prioritises security and liquidity over yield.
- **SUSTAINABLE** – taking into account the arrangements for repayment of debt (including through MRP) and consideration of risk and the potential impact on the authority's overall financial sustainability in the medium to longer term.

And that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice and in full understanding of the risks involved and how these risks will be managed to levels that are acceptable to the organisation.

2.2. The Code requires the Capital strategy to set out the long term context for capital expenditure investment decisions.

3. Property asset management

- 3.1. The Corporate Landlord Division of the Resources Directorate is the custodian of the Council's Asset management strategy in place, to ensure that the assets forming the Council's Property Estate continue to meet the needs of the Authority in the long term. As asset lives could be 60 years or more, for practical purposes, expenditure requirements for a minimum of 10 years should be assessed to prevent any deferred repair work increasing the total life costs of the assets. The main elements of the Asset Management strategy which are key to the Capital strategy are:
- A complete and accurate asset register is held & will be maintained. This will include Land & Buildings, Community assets, Heritage assets, Investment Properties and operational structures such as Sewerage pumping works.
 - The required functionality & operational life of assets will be identified as a benchmark for condition assessments (e.g. from Corporate Plan)
 - An increasing use of Condition surveys information (5 year rolling programme on key assets) to improve liability and responsibility data and facilitate improved decision making
 - Maintenance and major works are identified from the surveys with timings optimised in order to minimise total asset life costs including maintenance and running costs
 - Health and Safety works are flagged as a priority
 - The Capital and Revenue spend levels per year will be identified and fed into the budget setting processes with the aim of not deferring spend which would increase extent of emergency works and total life costs
 - Where costs and/or timing cannot be predicted with a reasonably high level of certainty an average forecast cost / timing should be used for planning purposes. Where the likelihood of occurrence as well as cost is highly uncertain, accounting good practice advocates a contingency plan should be put in place e.g. a preliminary design & program of works prepared, the required budget spread over several years and an earmarked reserve built up from annual repair budget
 - Where an asset is held to generate income in line with meeting core strategic policy aims and objectives, as part of the business case, the recurrent expenditure required on those assets to maximise net income, will be identified and proposed for addition to budgets.
 - The cost profile generated from the above process will be fed into the 4 year Capital Budget decision making process.
 - Surplus assets and part assets have & will continue to be identified and an option appraisal carried out to determine if the asset should be sold to generate a capital receipt, developed and sold for a higher receipt, used to generate revenue income or transferred to a 3rd party for the benefit of the community. Under any of these scenarios, end of life costs will need to be more transparently determined and budgeted.

4. Infrastructure asset management

- 4.1. Unlike property assets, Infrastructure assets are managed by the various divisions of Enterprise Directorate. They will still need to assess what expenditure is required over a minimum of 10 years to minimise the total life cost of their assets. To ensure that the Highways Network and other Infrastructure assets held by the Authority continue to meet the long term needs of the County and the Authority, the Authority will:

- Look to maintain a complete and accurate asset register for Highways Network Assets & any other assets maintained by the team including adjacent land, flood alleviation facilities and substations. The Council's infrastructure database hasn't historically had the same corporate importance as the property asset register, as it isn't used to substantiate data or support revaluations in the annual statement of accounts. An exercise will be necessary to confirm quality of data within the Highways system to support 10 year reporting of works.
- For the majority of these assets, the expectation is for necessary repairs and maintenance to keep the assets in working condition for the foreseeable future i.e. well beyond 10 years. If this is not the case, the required operational life should be recorded.
- The minimum acceptable level of condition must be defined for each asset or part asset. This is likely to be the level of condition below which lifecycle costs start to increase.
- Service officers have traditionally forecast a backlog of highways repair of circa £80m, but without explicit review. Condition surveys are carried out periodically, by a mixture of Scrim testing (skid resistance) or inspections at a predefined frequency dependent upon the type of road so deterioration of assets below the minimum standard is documented and can be forecast. This information will also be used to indicate if the number of assets falling below the minimum standard is increasing year on year indicating that budgets available need to be increased. The impact of varying budgets over the last 10 years should also be investigated to inform this process.
- Traffic & pedestrian surveys will be carried out at a periodically to better assess the future life of the assets. It is acknowledged that weather has a significant impact on the life of assets and that weather patterns are changing. This cannot be controlled but must be taken into account.
- Ensure that Health and Safety works are prioritised.
- One off major works expected to be required will also be identified with a latest completion date and estimated cost. This may include large one offs which are outside the normal workload of the Operations & Design teams.
- The maintenance and major works required on an annual basis to minimise total asset life costs are identified from the surveys and used to propose budgets required for budget setting for the next 10 years. The impact on total life costs, should sufficient budget not be allocated, should also be reported to members to inform decision making, as an improvement to simply identifying an unsubstantiated backlog of repairs.
- Where costs and/or timing cannot be predicted with a high level of certainty, (similar to property assets), an average forecast cost / frequency for groups of similar assets is advocated, and use of contributions to earmarked reserve encouraged to afford the volatility of as yet unquantified significant one off future works

5. Investments for Service purposes

- 5.1. The Council has historically incurred the majority of its capital expenditure on the assets required to provide its services such as schools, highways and corporate facilities.

- 5.2. However it may also invest in other entities for the wider economic and societal benefits of its communities or businesses. This may include making loans or (more recently) considering taking an equity interest in local bodies or the Council's subsidiaries & joint ventures which in turn contribute to services to Monmouthshire residents. It may also include providing guarantees to other bodies. In light of the public service objective, the Council traditionally is willing to take more risk on these investments than it would with more traditional treasury investments, which are more highly regulated, however any such arrangement should only be entered into if such investments are assessed to break even after all costs are taken into account or if the benefits of the scheme are considered to be worth the net cost.
- 5.3. Decisions on service related investments (e.g. vibrant homes loans afforded through WG repayable grant or economic development loans) can be made by the relevant service manager provided a 100% loss can be covered by the managers existing budgets. Should additional budget/funding be required in the event of a default, then before making the service expense/investment, the Section 151 officer is required to be consulted and where member approval is felt necessary that the details and risks involved presented to Cabinet for approval. The criteria and limits laid down in the strategy for treasury Investments can be used as a comparator to measure risks against. Most loans and shares are capital expenditure and unless undertaken through the Commercial Investment delegation to Investment Committee, such decision requires approval of full Council to be added to the capital programme.
- 5.4. A list of investments for service purposes including loans and guarantees will be maintained by the Treasury team and they will be assessed at least annually and reported as part of the annual accounts and include:
- £40,000 of seed share capital was provided to SRS Business Solutions Ltd in 2011/12 alongside an equal amount from Torfaen County Borough Council
 - Foster carer loans
 - Low cost home ownership equity interest.

6. Commercial Activities

- 6.1. Following a sustained period of financial austerity and with financial support for local public services declining, the Council has invested in commercial property and other commercial investments to support ongoing revenue budgets and promote wider economic regeneration and strategic policy aims within the County and its borders.
- 6.2. Early in 2017/18 the Authority completed the construction of a Solar Farm for £5m.
- 6.3. In 2018/19, as part of a wider approved commercial investment budget of £50m and following creation of an Investment Committee to oversee this, the Council purchased a large unit at Castlegate Business Park for £8m and completed the purchase of Newport Leisure Park for £21m.

- 6.4. In 2020/21 secured loan funding of £1.9 million for a 10-year term was made to a Special Purpose Vehicle (Monmouthshire Broadband Limited). The loan is secured against the network assets held and totals £1.15m to date which is to be used to build a mixed wireless and fibre-optic access network to improve broadband speeds across Monmouthshire.
- 6.5. Given the ongoing pressures, risks and challenges presenting as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, further investment into new commercial investment opportunities has been paused for the short-term.
- 6.6. Under changes to the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) lending arrangements in March 2020 the government ended access to the PWLB for Authorities that wished to buy commercial assets primarily for yield, as assessed by the statutory section 151 officer of the Authority. Authorities that wish to buy commercial assets primarily for yield would remain free to do so but would not be able to take out new loans from the PWLB in that financial year.
- 6.7. Following these changes the Council will look to maintain an investment strategy that continues to support the wider economic regeneration and strategic policy aims within the County of Monmouthshire and/or where market failure is evident, and will not look to make commercial investment primarily for yield.
- 6.8. Commercial investments will be revalued at least annually as part of the ongoing review of the Commercial investment portfolio, and the performance of these assets assessed regularly through the service budget monitoring of Corporate Landlord service, via reporting to the Investment Committee and annually to Governance & Audit Committee.
- 6.9. With the increased financial returns expected on investment available from commercial investment, the Council naturally accepts higher risk compared with traditional treasury investments. Risk exposures for property investments include a fall in capital value, vacancies, poor tenant performance, rent increases below inflation, lack of market appeal/obsolescence/cost to rectify and changes in legislation. For other non-treasury investments such as loans and equity, risks also include – fall in market value, poor repayment performance and insolvency/costs of debt recovery.
- 6.10. The Council has adopted a very prudent approach to the financial management of its commercial assets, in ensuring that business cases are predicated on affording the related borrowing before providing a net return to assist with revenue budget setting. It has also elected to treat such investments as capital expenditure and incur an explicit annual minimum revenue provision in affording the related borrowing, whereas draft Welsh Government guidance permits flexibility to defer financing considerations to when property is sold, providing that the selling price can reasonably be anticipated to be greater than purchase price.
- 6.11. To date, commercial investments have focused primarily on property acquisition so the risks are managed by corporate landlord service assisted by external professionals where

necessary. They will manage asset maintenance and the tenant/landlord interface including collecting income. They will review cashflows and assess/forecast the value, quality and diversity of the investments in order to propose any modifications required to the portfolio to increase return and/or reduce risk.

- 6.12. In order that commercial investments remain proportionate to the size of the authority and in keeping with principles of affordability, prudence and sustainability, the approved commercial investment budget was limited to £50m.
- 6.13. In the event that a property holding is deemed to be underperforming or fails to meet the related debt repayment costs, a regular review will be undertaken to see if it is possible to:
- Retain the asset and increase net returns
 - Dispose of the asset at a net profit compared to purchase price
 - Retain the asset for future capital gains
 - Maximise return on capital in another way
- 6.14. The Authority will continue to identify any of its historical investment properties which could provide a valuable capital receipt over and above the value to the Authority of holding the asset.
- 6.15. The responsibility and accountability to manage the risks associated with any non-property related commercial investments will rest with the service that has advocated the investment case, and they will retain the responsibility to update Investment Committee periodically with performance against the business case presented, and assist in the annual report preparation to Governance & Audit Committee.
- 6.16. Decisions on commercial investments are made by the Investment Committee in line with the criteria and limits within the Asset Management Strategy.
- 6.17. Further details of the selection process for commercial investments, the limits agreed with Council and details of the identification and management of the risks associated with commercial investments are in the Asset Management Strategy, Asset Investment Policy and other supporting documents.

7. Other Assets

- 7.1. In addition to the Council Property Estate and the Infrastructure Assets, the Authority also owns and rents Heritage Assets, Vehicles and Plant & Equipment
- 7.2. Currently no formal review is undertaken to confirm the benefit of retaining the Heritage assets portfolio. The introduction of the capital strategy applies a more regular assessment of need against liability. This is proposed to be an increasing element of the asset management plan, and as a minimum it is proposed to adopt a formal 5 year review period.

- 7.3. The Vehicles and Plant, both owned and leased, are reviewed regularly by the Head of Finance in conjunction with the Transport Manager to minimise total life costs.

8. Capital financing & the Capital financing requirement

- 8.1. All capital expenditure incurred has to be physically financed. The available sources of financing include:
- **Grants/External contributions** – these should be maximised but opportunities tend to be limited and specific to particular projects
 - **Capital Support Grant** – this is fixed by the Welsh Government, is finite, but is un-hypothecated and therefore at the discretion of the Council how it is used.
 - **Reserve/revenue funding** – the Authority currently forecasts Earmarked and total Council fund reserves to be £10.1m and £22.4m respectively at 31st March 2021. Of the Earmarked reserves, only £625k is currently held for capital investment and therefore represents a limited source of capital financing
 - **Capital receipts** - £3.8m of receipts are forecast to be generated over the MTFP window on top of the £13.5m forecast to be held at 31st March 2022. Of these, £10.1m has been allocated to finance capital expenditure over the MTFP window leaving only £7.2m forecast to be available to fund new schemes over the same period.
- 8.2. The planned financing of the capital expenditure is indicated in the table below:

Table 1: Capital financing in £m

	2021/22 budget	2022/23 budget	2023/24 budget	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget
External sources	14.1	3.6	2.4	2.4	2.4
Internal resources	6.0	3.6	1.9	1.8	1.7
Borrowing	9.9	22.4	8.0	5.5	5.5
TOTAL	30.0	29.6	12.3	9.8	9.7

- 8.3. Borrowing is often the only source of funding available once the limited external and internal resources have been exhausted. All borrowing has to be repaid and this includes both the actual debt principal plus interest costs on the debt.
- 8.4. In the current economic environment, with interest rates remaining low, borrowing is a cheaper source of financing than 10 years ago, but it only delays the need to finance capital expenditure which is ultimately met from the revenue budget in the form of interest and Minimum Revenue Provision.

- 8.5. The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of borrowing finance is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This increases with new borrowing-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP and capital receipts used to replace the borrowing.
- 8.6. Based on current revenue and capital budgets noted above, the Authorities CFR is expected increase in 2022/23 reflecting the increased amount of capital expenditure financed from borrowing. The Council's estimated CFR and related MRP charges over the medium term are as follows:

Table 2: CFR and related MRP charges

	2021/22 Forecast	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate
Capital Financing Requirement (Total in £m)	192.7	232.1	232.7	230.7	228.6
Minimum Revenue Provision (£m)	6.4	6.7	7.3	7.6	7.7

- 8.7. With the pending introduction of IFRS 16 Leases, the CFR and borrowing identified as relating to leases is likely to increase, due to the change in the way that finance leases for lessees are treated. However CIPFA LASAAC is currently consulting on further deferral of the implementation of IFRS 16 Leases until 2023/24 in response to the pressures on council finance teams as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 8.8. The Council's minimum revenue provision policy should remain prudent and not subject to annual change. This policy has been reviewed within last 5 years by Members, and is a feature of the annual Treasury management strategy report received at this same meeting.

9. Capital disposals & receipts

- 9.1. The Council's Asset Management plan sets out the Council's vision, priorities and key actions associated with managing our assets. The aim is to ensure sustainability, and maximise the financial and social value of our assets for our communities. The ongoing challenging financial conditions mean we must have robust policies and programmes in place to ensure our estate is lean, efficient, meets the needs of service users and is fit for purpose. The strategy also recognises the importance of maximising the income we can generate from our property assets and we have started to actively seek opportunities to increase revenue generation.
- 9.2. Any assets which are deemed to be surplus to service requirements will be identified for possible sale/income generation in consultation with the Estates department. The procedures governing disposals are captured in the Council's Surplus asset disposal policy.
- 9.3. The Council anticipates the following capital receipts in the forthcoming financial years is as follows:

Table 3: Forecast Capital receipts

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Balance as at 1st April	9,581	13,503	11,108	10,311	8,714
Less: capital receipts used for financing	(3,582)	(2,311)	(1,294)	(1,194)	(1,094)
Less: capital receipts used to support capitalisation directive	(2,208)	(2,650)	(508)	(508)	(508)
	3,791	8,542	9,306	8,609	7,112
Capital receipts Received	2,596	0	0	0	0
Capital receipts Forecast	7,115	2,565	1,004	104	104
Forecast Balance as at 31st March	13,503	11,108	10,311	8,714	7,217

- 9.4. Further specific details of planned asset disposals are included in the annual Capital MTFP deliberated by Members, with specific sales proposals being an exempt appendix from public reporting requirements due to potential to compromise of receipt maximisation.
- 9.5. The value of Capital receipts forecast after 2022/23 drops off quite considerably which is reflective of the replacement local development plan (RDLP) not proceeding as quickly as envisaged in the original delivery agreement. This will have a substantial impact on the balance of receipts available to fund future capital investment demands. It is therefore important that reliance on capital receipts used to support capitalisation direction (to fund one-off revenue costs eligible to be met from capital resources) is seen as a short term measure only.
- 9.6. Traditionally receipts have been earmarked to finance the Authorities future schools investment. In a change from previous practice, whilst the Council has further future schools aspirations, it is not proposed to advocate a similar approach to members in respect of tranche B. Schools based assets commonly have a useful life of 50 years +, and as such traditional long term loan funding can be sourced at competitive rates with limited annual revenue volatility. The Council derives greater revenue benefit by using capital receipts in affording replacement of short life assets, given the avoidance of proportionately more significant minimum revenue provision.

10. Setting capital budgets

Table 4: Capital Medium Term Financial Plan

	Indicative Budget 2022/23	Indicative Budget 2023/24	Indicative Budget 2024/25	Indicative Budget 2025/26
Asset Management Schemes	1,929,276	1,929,276	1,929,276	1,929,276
School Development Schemes	13,681,287	50,000	50,000	50,000

Infrastructure & Transport Schemes	5,792,740	6,272,740	3,627,740	3,527,740
Regeneration Schemes	330,400	602,900	730,200	730,200
County Farms Schemes	300,773	300,773	300,773	300,773
Inclusion Schemes	1,150,000	1,150,000	1,150,000	1,150,000
ICT Schemes	682,000	413,000	413,000	413,000
Vehicles Leasing	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000
Capitalisation Directive	2,649,500	507,500	507,500	507,500
Other Schemes	3,070,000	1,070,000	1,070,000	1,070,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	31,085,977	13,796,190	11,278,490	11,178,490

10.1. Member responsibility for assets rests with the Cabinet member for Whole Authority Resources. The main governance and approval process for capital investment is summarised as follows:

- Council approve the overall revenue and capital budgets following recommendations from Cabinet. They also approve the borrowing limits of which the capital programme will need to remain within (the Authorised limit). These limits are a key performance indicator for treasury management and ensure that capital expenditure is limited and borrowing remains within an affordable limit.
- Any variation of the Authorised borrowing limit can only be approved by Council.
- Council approve the Treasury Management, Investment & Borrowing strategies, which are intrinsically linked to capital expenditure and the capital strategy. Further details of these are provided in section 8.
- Items of capital investment are discussed and scrutinised at the Capital and Asset Management Working Group (CAMWG), which is made up of senior officers from all service areas. Discussion also includes asset disposals, where capital investment is required, prioritisation of that investment in line with the priority matrix and the overall asset management agenda.
- Recommendations on capital investment will be made by CAMWG to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) following review of the project appraisal for onward inclusion in the capital budget and to be considered by Cabinet and Council.
- Monitoring of capital expenditure is reported to Cabinet, and includes update on capital receipts and impact on the revenue budget of the decisions made.
- The 2022/23 and forward capital budgets include investment in schemes which attract significant match funding from external bodies which services will be responsible for bidding for. The CAMWG will play a pivotal role in ensuring that this investment is properly aligned with the overall corporate plan priorities and is robustly assessed against the agreed priority matrix included below.

10.2. The identified backlog capital budget pressures that currently sit outside of the above capital MTFP total £125m and indicates that there is a higher call for capital expenditure than the Authority considers it can affordably finance. This means that capital schemes will have to be prioritised or the capital available has to be spread more thinly than is ideal. All

stakeholders must recognise that funding capital expenditure by borrowing only defers the charge to revenue budgets to future years, but at the same time if capital maintenance works are deferred then the total life costs of supporting an asset are likely to increase. This effect is often veiled in medium term financial planning as asset lives are much longer than four years.

- 10.3. Annual investment included in the capital programme for property maintenance, highways maintenance, relevant specific capital grants and the future schools programme will assist in addressing the highest priority backlog issues, focussing on worst condition first and risk. However, estate rationalisation programmes, closure/disposal of assets, asset transfers and other capital projects to refurbish or replace operational properties will also be utilised to offset the backlog funding required. This will not address the specific total backlog, but is a way of targeting the main issues in an affordable manner.
- 10.4. The below priority ranking matrix approved as part of the inaugural capital strategy assists the CAMWG and SLT with their considerations of future capital investment.

Ref	Aspect	Indicative Rank
H&S	Health & safety works (life & limb works)	1
Legal	Legal & regulatory obligations	1
Rev	Allow a balanced revenue budget to be set, or a net deficit in revenue spending to be positively addressed	2
Corp	Deliver corporate plan priorities	2
Third	Attract significant 3 rd party or private match funding to the County	3
S2S	Spend to save transformational works (including flexible use of capital receipts)	3
INC	Spend to earn net income – rents, interest and dividends	3
Sust	Create sustainable income streams – business rates and council tax	3
AMP	Asset management plan outcomes	4
INF	Addresses major infrastructure investment	4

11. Revenue budget implications

- 11.1. Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue, offset by any investment income receivable. These net annual charges are known as financing costs. The table below compares these financing costs to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount of income from Council Tax, business rates and general government grants. The overall proportion of financing costs remains fairly static over the MTFP window which is reflective of the total revenue stream increasing in line with expected inflationary impacts whilst the financing costs increase moderately in line further capital investment made.

Table 5: Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream

Proportion of Financing Costs to net revenue stream	2021/22 Budget	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate
Net Interest payable £m	3.6	3.9	4.1	4.1	4.5
MRP £m	6.4	6.7	7.3	7.6	7.7
Total Financing costs £m	10.0	10.6	11.4	11.7	12.2
Net Revenue Stream (£m)	155.1	168.9	179.3	187.6	196.3
Proportion of net revenue stream %	6.45%	6.29%	6.38%	6.24%	6.21%

- 11.2. **Sustainability:** Due to the very long-term nature of capital expenditure and financing, the revenue budget implications of expenditure incurred in the next few years will extend for up to 50 years afterwards. The Section 151 officer is satisfied that the proposed capital programme is prudent, affordable and sustainable because the financing costs have been spread over no more than, the lower of 50 years and the expected life of the resultant asset, so the assets will be paid for by the Council tax payers benefitting from them over the life of the assets. The financing costs for assets funded by borrowing are included in each annual revenue budget which is balanced before approval by Council.

12. Treasury management

- 12.1. The Treasury management strategy (TMS) is considered alongside the Capital strategy at Council and the figures within it the link directly to the impact of the borrowing resulting from the Capital strategy and the subsequent capital investment.
- 12.2. Treasury management is concerned with keeping sufficient but not excessive cash available to meet the Council's spending needs, while managing the risks involved. Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account. The Council limits the need to take out actual borrowing by using positive cash flows, largely from reserves, to fund capital expenditure funded by borrowing, known as internal borrowing.
- 12.3. Based on historic capital expenditure and due to decisions taken in the past, as at 31st December 2021, the Council has £169.7m borrowing at a weighted average interest rate of 2.3% and £40.0m treasury investments at a weighted average rate of 0.38%.

13. Borrowing strategy

- 13.1. Whilst the Council has significant long term borrowing requirements, the Council's current strategy of funding capital expenditure is through utilising internal resources such as reserves (called 'internal borrowing') rather than undertaking new borrowing i.e. we defer taking out new long term borrowing and fund capital expenditure from day to day positive cash-flows for as long as we can.
- 13.2. By using this strategy, the Council can also minimise cash holding at a time when counterparty risk remains high. The interest rates achievable on the Council's investments are also significantly lower than the current rates payable on long term borrowing and this remains a primary driver for our current 'internally borrowed' strategy.
- 13.3. Whilst this strategy minimises investment counterparty risk, the risk of interest rate exposure is increased as the current low longer term borrowing rates may rise in the future. The market position is being constantly monitored in order to minimise this risk.
- 13.4. The Authority's chief objective when borrowing money is to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving certainty of those costs over the period for which funds are required. The flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Authority's long-term plans change is a secondary objective. These objectives are often conflicting, and the Council therefore seeks to strike a balance between cheap short-term loans (currently available at around 0.3%) and long-term fixed rate loans where the future cost is known but higher (currently 2.13% to 2.64%).
- 13.5. Projected levels of the Council's total debt (which comprises borrowing, PFI liabilities & finance leases) are shown below, compared with the capital financing requirement.

Table 6: Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement in £m

Gross Debt Forecast compared to CFR £m	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate
Debt (Inc. PFI, leases, right of use assets)	165.5	182.5	183.3	185.8	189.1
Capital Financing Requirement (Total)	192.7	232.1	232.7	230.7	228.6

- 13.6. Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short-term. As can be seen in the table above, the Council expects to comply with this in the medium term.
- 13.7. **Affordable borrowing limit:** The Council is legally obliged to approve an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the 'authorised limit' for external debt) each year.
- 13.8. The 'Operational borrowing limits' over the medium term, have been set in line with the expected borrowing required to finance the current capital programme to 2025/26 and these

act as a key management tool. If any increase to the authorised limit is required, including to borrow for investment/income generation schemes or regeneration investment (loans) this will need to be brought to Council for approval. The 'Authorised borrowing limits', provide a buffer for (i) the ability to manage day to day cash requirements and (ii) to undertake a level of borrowing early where appropriate / affordable.

Table 7: Authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt in £m

<u>Authorised & Operational Borrowing Limits</u>	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate
Authorised limit - borrowing	246.5	268.2	269.1	268.1	267.1
Operational boundary - PFI, leases & right of use assets	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4
Authorised Limit - total external debt	250.9	272.6	273.5	272.5	271.5
Operational Boundary - borrowing	216.3	238.0	238.9	237.9	236.9
Operational Boundary - PFI, leases & right of use assets	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9
Operational Boundary - total external debt	219.2	240.9	241.8	240.8	239.8

14. Investment strategy

- 14.1. Treasury investments arise from receiving cash before it is paid out again. Investments made for service reasons or for pure financial gain are not generally considered to be part of treasury management.
- 14.2. The Councils strategy is to follow the priorities of security, liquidity and yield, in that order. Cash that is likely to be spent in the near term is invested securely, for example with the government, other local authorities or selected high-quality banks, to minimise the risk of loss. Money that will be held for longer terms is invested more widely, including in bonds, shares and property, to balance the risk of loss against the risk of receiving returns below inflation. Both near-term and longer-term investments may be held in pooled funds, where an external fund manager makes decisions on which particular investments to buy and the Council may request its money back at short notice. This reduces the risk of default by diversification and the use of dedicated and experienced fund managers and also can increase return.
- 14.3. The Council's strategy seeks to keep invested cash balances low and in doing so reducing external borrowing, which is more cost effective than chasing investment returns. The main exception to this approach is that the Council is required to demonstrate a commitment to keeping a £10m minimum investment balance to meet the requirements of a professional client under the Mifid II regulations (Markets in financial instruments directive).

Table 8: Treasury management investments in £m

	31.3.2022 forecast	31.3.2023 forecast	31.3.2024 forecast	31.3.2025 forecast	31.3.2026 forecast
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Near-term	8.6	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Longer-term	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
TOTAL	14.6	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0

- 14.4. **Governance:** Decisions on treasury management investment and borrowing are made daily and are therefore delegated to the S151 Officer or Deputy and their staff, who must act in line with the treasury management strategy currently approved by Members. The 2022/23 Strategy will be considered by Governance & Audit Committee in February 2022 and is presented alongside this report for approval by full Council. In addition mid-year and treasury outturn reports on treasury management activity are presented to Audit Committee which is responsible for scrutinising treasury management decisions.

15. Risk

- 15.1. A significant aspect of the Capital strategy is involved with controlling & balancing various risks i.e.
- The credit risk of treasury investments – this is controlled using credit worthy institutions, diversification, limiting maturity, maximising the use of internal borrowing.
 - The refinancing risk of treasury investments – controlling the profile of debt maturities.
 - The interest rate risk of treasury activities. The Authority has opted to abide by an upper limit for the amount of net variable rate borrowing, but intends to adopt a simpler, more transparent indicator of variable rate borrowing as a proportion of total.
 - The risks of providing loans and guarantees for service purposes need to be acknowledged and managed from the outset.
 - The risks to the total net return on assets acquired for commercial income are expected to be higher than for assets acquired for service purposes and need to be fully assessed and managed from the outset.
- 15.2. In undertaking business loans to 3rd parties, commercial investment acquisition and proposing alternate business models there is an inherent risk that members and officers not having sufficient knowledge and skills of the sector concerned such that the risks and benefits may not be properly understood and managed. This is addressed by appropriate assessment, training and external advice.

16. Knowledge & skills

- 16.1. The Council employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for making capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions. For example, both the Section 151 officer and Head of Commercial and Integrated Landlord Services are professionally qualified with longstanding senior practical experience. For both accountants and valuers, the Council offers particular training roles and also from a staff development perspective encourages and support wider staff to undertake study towards relevant professional qualifications and continuing professional development.
- 16.2. Where Council staff do not have the knowledge and skills required, use is made of external advisers and consultants that are specialists in their field. The Council currently employs Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisors, and Alder King as property investment advisors. This approach is more cost effective than employing such staff directly, and ensures that the Council has access to knowledge and skills commensurate with its risk appetite. Arlingclose's assistance has been sourced through competitive tendering, and their fees paid independent of their advice.

2022/23 Treasury Management Strategy

1. Economic background and forecasts for interest rates

- 1.1. **Economic background:** The ongoing impact on the UK from coronavirus, together with higher inflation, higher interest rates, and the country's trade position post-Brexit, will be major influences on the Authority's treasury management strategy for 2022/23.
- 1.2. At its meeting ending on 2nd February 2022 the MPC voted by a majority of 5-4 to increase Bank Rate by 0.25 percentage points, to 0.5%. The MPC voted unanimously for the Bank of England to begin to reduce the stock of UK government bond purchases by ceasing to reinvest maturing assets. The Committee also voted unanimously for the Bank of England to begin to reduce the stock of sterling non-financial investment-grade corporate bond purchases by ceasing to reinvest maturing assets and by a programme of corporate bond sales to be completed no earlier than the end of 2023.
- 1.3. The lower severity of Omicron means that the economic impact should be limited. The UK economy had a weak Q4 2021 due to the virus, but growth is likely to bounce back in Q1 2022. However, higher inflation will dampen demand. In the UK, households face a difficult outlook. Fiscal and monetary headwinds alongside a sharp reduction in real income growth will weigh on disposable income, ultimately leading to slower growth.
- 1.4. UK CPI for November 2021 registered 5.1% year on year, up from 4.2% in the previous month. Core inflation, which excludes the more volatile components, rose to 4.0% y/y from 3.4%. The most recent labour market data for the three months to October 2021 showed the unemployment rate fell to 4.2% while the employment rate rose to 75.5%.
- 1.5. In October 2021, the headline 3-month average annual growth rate for wages were 4.9% for total pay and 4.3% for regular pay. In real terms, after adjusting for inflation, total pay growth was up 1.7% while regular pay was up 1.0%. The change in pay growth has been affected by a change in composition of employee jobs, where there has been a fall in the number and proportion of lower paid jobs.
- 1.6. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 1.3% in the third calendar quarter of 2021 according to the initial estimate, compared to a gain of 5.5% q/q in the previous quarter, with the annual rate slowing to 6.6% from 23.6%. The Q3 gain was modestly below the consensus forecast of a 1.5% q/q rise. During the quarter activity measures were boosted by sectors that reopened following pandemic restrictions, suggesting that wider spending was flat. Looking ahead, while monthly GDP readings suggest there had been some increase in momentum in the latter part of Q3, Q4 growth is expected to be soft.
- 1.7. GDP growth in the euro zone increased by 2.2% in calendar Q3 2021 following a gain of 2.1% in the second quarter and a decline of -0.3% in the first. Headline inflation has been strong, with CPI registering 4.9% year-on-year in November, the fifth successive month of inflation. Core CPI inflation was 2.6% y/y in November, the fourth month of successive increases from July's 0.7% y/y. At these levels, inflation is above the European Central

Bank's target of 'below, but close to 2%', putting some pressure on its long-term stance of holding its main interest rate of 0%.

- 1.8. The US economy expanded at an annualised rate of 2.1% in Q3 2021, slowing sharply from gains of 6.7% and 6.3% in the previous two quarters. In its December 2021 interest rate announcement, the Federal Reserve continue to maintain the Fed Funds rate at between 0% and 0.25% but outlined its plan to reduce its asset purchase programme earlier than previously stated and signalled they are in favour of tightening interest rates at a faster pace in 2022, with three 0.25% movements now expected.
- 1.9. **Credit outlook:** Since the start of 2021, relatively benign credit conditions have led to credit default swap (CDS) prices for the larger UK banks to remain low and had steadily edged down throughout the year up until mid-November when the emergence of Omicron has caused them to rise modestly. However, the generally improved economic outlook during 2021 helped bank profitability and reduced the level of impairments many had made as provisions for bad loans. However, the relatively recent removal of coronavirus-related business support measures by the government means the full impact on bank balance sheets may not be known for some time.
- 1.10. The improved economic picture during 2021 led the credit rating agencies to reflect this in their assessment of the outlook for the UK sovereign as well as several financial institutions, revising them from negative to stable and even making a handful of rating upgrades.
- 1.11. Looking ahead, while there is still the chance of bank losses from bad loans as government and central bank support is removed, the institutions on the Authority's counterparty list are well-capitalised and general credit conditions across the sector are expected to remain benign. Duration limits for counterparties on the Authority's lending list are under regular review and will continue to reflect economic conditions and the credit outlook.
- 1.12. **Interest rate forecast:** The Authority's treasury management adviser Arlingclose is forecasting that Bank Rate will continue to rise in calendar Q1 2022 to subdue inflationary pressures and the perceived desire by the BoE to move away from emergency levels of interest rates.
- 1.13. Investors continue to price in multiple rises in Bank Rate over the next forecast horizon, and Arlingclose believes that although interest rates will rise again, the increases will not be to the extent predicted by financial markets. In the near-term, the risks around Arlingclose's central case are to the upside while over the medium-term the risks become more balanced.
- 1.14. Bond yields have risen sharply to accommodate tighter monetary policy, including the run off of central bank bond portfolios. The interplay between slowing growth and falling inflation, and tightening policy, will likely keep yields relatively flat.

2. Existing Treasury position

2.1. Borrowing and investments as at 31 December 2021 and at the same date in the prior year are shown in the following table.

	31st Dec 2020 Actual Portfolio £m	Average Rate %	31st Dec 2021 Actual Portfolio £m	Average Rate %
External borrowing:				
Public Works Loan Board	74.5	3.53	89.4	3.03
LOBO loans from banks	13.6	4.80	13.6	4.8
Welsh Government Loans	5.3	0.00	4.8	0.0
Local authority & other ST loans	77.9	0.15	61.9	0.1
Total external borrowing	171.3	1.98	169.7	2.30
Treasury investments:				
Banks & building societies (unsecured)	4.0	0.00	2.0	0.01
Government (incl. local authorities)	10.2	0.00	6.5	0.00
Money Market Funds	5.5	0.01	28.0	0.01
Strategic pooled funds	3.0	4.00	3.5	4.28
Total treasury investments	22.7	0.53	40.0	0.38
Net debt	148.6		132.10	

2.2. Borrowing is predominantly made up of fixed interest rate loans payable on maturity. Investments fluctuate daily and are represented by fixed term deposits, notice deposit accounts and money market funds. These balances arise due to the timing of cash flows and working capital as well as the existence of reserves, provisions and balances required for future use.

3. Borrowing

Borrowing requirement

3.1. The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while usable reserves and working capital are the underlying resources available for investment. The Authority's current strategy is to maintain borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing.

Table 1: Balance sheet summary and forecast

	31.3.21 Estimate £m	31.3.22 Forecast £m	31.3.23 Forecast £m	31.3.24 Forecast £m	31.3.25 Forecast £m	31.3.26 Forecast £m
General Fund CFR	189.2	192.7	232.1	232.7	230.7	228.6
Less: Other debt liabilities *	(2.4)	(2.4)	(2.4)	(2.4)	(2.4)	(2.4)
Loans CFR	186.8	190.3	229.7	230.3	228.3	226.1
Less: External borrowing **	(182.8)	(165.5)	(182.5)	(183.3)	(185.8)	(189.1)
Internal borrowing	4.1	24.8	47.2	47.0	42.5	37.0
Less: Usable reserves	(28.5)	(36.1)	(33.7)	(33.5)	(32.4)	(31.3)
[Less/Plus]: Working capital	(14.6)	(10.0)	(10.0)	(10.0)	(10.0)	(10.0)
(Investments) or External borrowing requirement	(39.0)	(21.3)	3.5	3.5	0.1	(4.3)

* leases and PFI liabilities that form part of the Authority's total debt

** shows only loans to which the Authority is committed and excludes optional refinancing

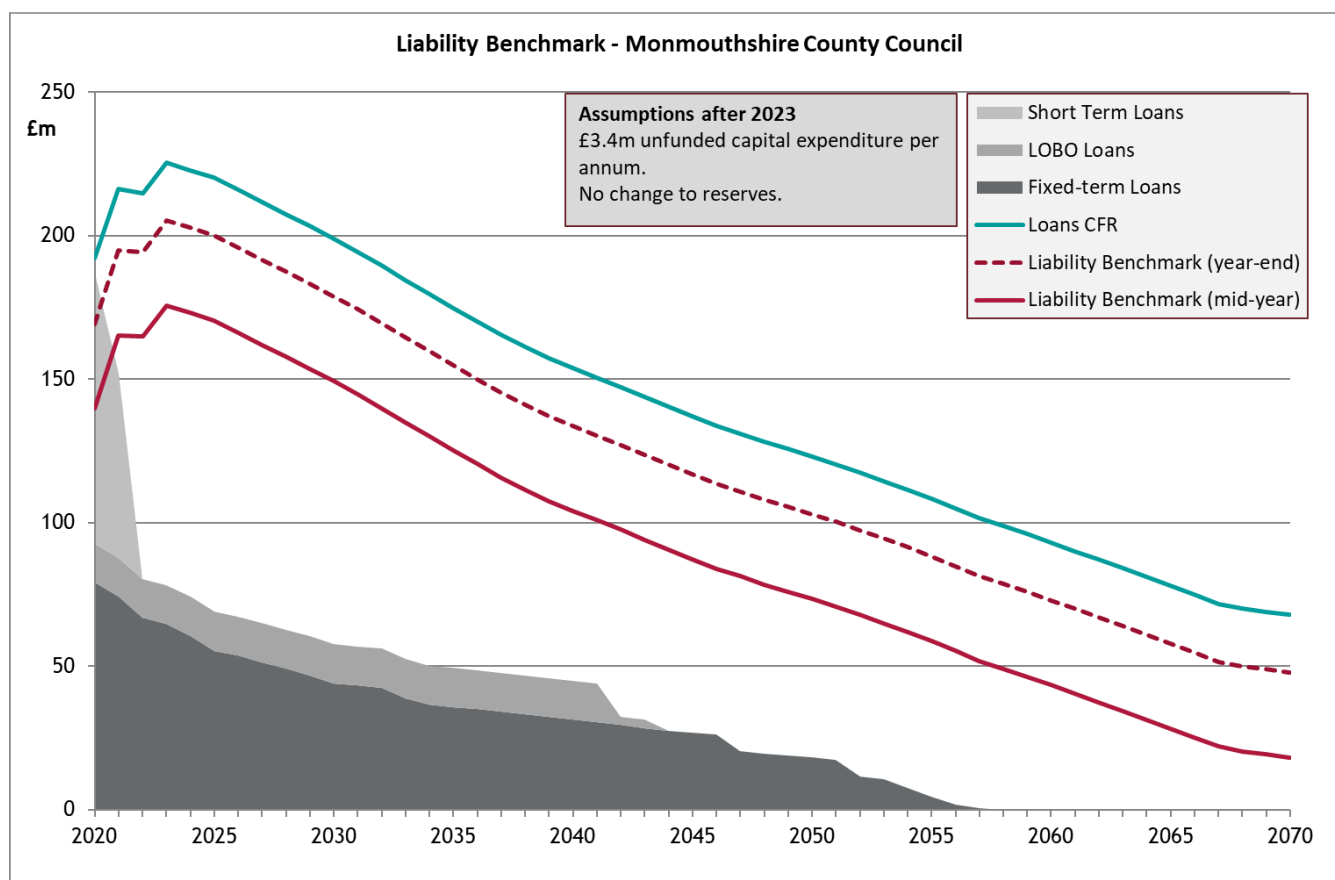
- 3.2. The Authority has an increasing CFR in the short term due to capital programme investment, alongside a comparatively low level of investments and will therefore be required to maintain an appropriate level of borrowing over the forecast period.
- 3.3. CIPFA's *Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* recommends that the Authority's total debt should be lower than its highest forecast CFR over the next three years. Table 1 shows that the Authority expects to comply with this recommendation for the forthcoming year.
- 3.4. **Liability benchmark:** To compare the Council's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes the same forecasts as table 1 above, but that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of £10m at each year-end to maintain sufficient liquidity but minimise credit risk.

Table 2: Liability benchmark

	31.3.21 Actual £m	31.3.22 Estimate £m	31.3.23 Forecast £m	31.3.24 Forecast £m	31.3.25 Forecast £m	31.3.26 Forecast £m
Loans CFR	186.8	190.3	229.7	230.3	228.3	226.1
Less: Usable reserves	-28.5	-36.1	-33.7	-33.5	-32.4	-31.3
Less: Working capital	-14.6	-10.0	-10.0	-10.0	-10.0	-10.0
Plus: Preferred investments	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Liability benchmark	143.7	144.2	186.0	186.8	185.9	184.8

- 3.5. Following on from the medium-term forecasts in Table 2 above, the long-term liability benchmark below assumes capital expenditure funded by borrowing is maintained as the 2022/23 capital MTFP and thereafter £3.4m per year; that minimum revenue provision on

new capital expenditure is based on asset life as in the MTFP or 25 years and; income, expenditure and reserves held are not increasing or decreasing beyond the MTFP window. This is shown in the chart below:



- 3.6. Our underlying need to borrow is shown by the top blue line. However, due to the use of reserves and working capital, the Authority is expected to need total external borrowing between the full red lower line and the dotted line above it. As our existing loans portfolio (shown in grey) reduce as loans mature, new loans will therefore be required to fill the gap between the grey area and the red lines over the longer term. The Authority intends to maintain about a 50% level of short term loans which will partly fill this gap, but we will still need to take out longer term loans, mainly to fund the capital investment built into the Capital MTFP.
- 3.7. The Council does not intend to borrow in advance of need and will not do so just to gain financially from short term investment of that borrowing. However, this option may be considered if it is felt that borrowing in advance allows opportunities to lock into favourable long-term rates as part of risk mitigation. This will be limited to no more than the expected increase in the Council's Capital Financing Requirement over its medium term financial plan.
- 3.8. **Objectives:** The Authority's chief objective when borrowing money is to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving certainty of those costs over the period for which funds are required. The flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Authority's long-term plans change is a secondary objective.

Borrowing Strategy

- 3.9. Given the significant cuts to public expenditure over recent years and in particular to local government funding, the Authority's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio. With short-term interest rates currently much lower than long-term rates, it is likely to be more cost effective in the short-term to either use internal resources, or to borrow short-term loans instead. A roughly equal balance of long and short term debt is, at the time of writing, taken as the right balance to maintain sufficient long term stability.
- 3.10. The Bank of England Base Rate rose from 0.10% to 0.25% on 16th of December 2021, and to 0.5% on 2nd February 2022. Although this is still very low in an historical context another rise is expected in March 2022 and both short term local authority borrowing rates and PWLB rates have already risen.
- 3.11. At the start of December 2021, and with interest rate rises being implied in the market, the authority acted to lock in a further £20m of long term borrowing as outlined below:

Start Date	Duration (Years)	Amount	Rate	Weighted Rate
07/12/2021	45	5,000,000.00	1.43%	0.36%
07/12/2021	50	5,000,000.00	1.37%	0.34%
15/12/2021	46	2,500,000.00	1.31%	0.16%
15/12/2021	47	2,500,000.00	1.30%	0.16%
15/12/2021	48	2,500,000.00	1.29%	0.16%
15/12/2021	49	2,500,000.00	1.27%	0.16%
Total		20,000,000.00		1.35%

- 3.12. By doing so, the Authority was able to give some longer term certainty over borrowing costs and reduce overall treasury risk, despite some shorter term increases in overall interest cost. The benefits of internal / short-term borrowing will be monitored regularly against the potential for incurring additional costs by deferring borrowing into future years when long-term borrowing rates are forecast to rise modestly. Arlingclose will assist the Authority with this 'cost of carry' and breakeven analysis. Its output may determine whether the Authority borrows additional sums at long-term fixed rates in 2022/23 with a view to keeping future interest costs low, even if this causes additional cost in the short-term.
- 3.13. The Authority has previously raised the majority of its long-term borrowing from the PWLB but will consider long-term loans from other sources including banks, pensions and local authorities, and will investigate the possibility of issuing bonds and similar instruments, in

order to lower interest costs and reduce over-reliance on one source of funding in line with the CIPFA Code.

- 3.14. Alternatively, the Authority may arrange forward starting loans, where the interest rate is fixed in advance, but the cash is received in later years. This would enable certainty of cost to be achieved without suffering a cost of carry in the intervening period.
- 3.15. In addition, the Authority may borrow short-term loans to cover unplanned cash flow shortages.
- 3.16. **Sources of borrowing:** The approved sources of long-term and short-term borrowing are:
- HM Treasury's PWLB lending facility (formerly the Public Works Loan Board)
 - any institution approved for investments (see below)
 - any other bank or building society authorised to operate in the UK
 - any other UK public sector body
 - UK public and private sector pension funds (except the Greater Gwent Pension Fund)
 - capital market bond investors
 - UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc and other special purpose companies created to enable local authority bond issues
 - CSC Foundry Ltd

Other sources of debt finance: In addition, capital finance may be raised by the following methods that are not borrowing, but may be classed as other debt liabilities:

- leasing
 - hire purchase
 - Private Finance Initiative
 - sale and leaseback
- 3.17. **Municipal Bonds Agency:** UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc was established in 2014 by the Local Government Association as an alternative to the PWLB. It issues bonds on the capital markets and lends the proceeds to local authorities. This is a more complicated source of finance than the PWLB for two reasons: borrowing authorities will be required to provide bond investors with a guarantee to refund their investment in the event that the agency is unable to for any reason; and there will be a lead time of several months between committing to borrow and knowing the interest rate payable. Any decision to borrow from the Agency will therefore be the subject of a separate report to full Council.
- 3.18. **LOBOs:** The Authority holds £13.6m of LOBO (Lender's Option Borrower's Option) loans where the lender has the option to propose an increase in the interest rate at set dates, following which the Authority has the option to either accept the new rate or to repay the loan at no additional cost. All of these LOBOs have options during 2022/23, and although the Authority understands that lenders are unlikely to exercise their options in the current low interest rate environment, there remains an element of refinancing risk. The Authority will take the option to repay LOBO loans at no cost if it has the opportunity to do so.

- 3.19. **Short-term and variable rate loans:** These loans leave the Authority exposed to the risk of short-term interest rate rises and are therefore subject to the interest rate exposure limits in the treasury management indicators below.
- 3.20. **Debt rescheduling:** The PWLB allows authorities to repay loans before maturity and either pay a premium or receive a discount according to a set formula based on current interest rates. Other lenders may also be prepared to negotiate premature redemption terms. The Authority may take advantage of this and replace some loans with new loans, or repay loans without replacement, where this is expected to lead to an overall cost saving or a reduction in risk.

Borrowing prudential indicators

3.21. Gross debt compared to capital financing requirement

Gross Debt Forecast compared to CFR £m	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate
Debt (Inc. PFI, leases, right of use assets)	165.5	182.5	183.3	185.8	189.1
Capital Financing Requirement (Total)	192.7	232.1	232.7	230.7	228.6

- 3.22. Gross debt is forecast to remain below the capital financing requirement over the term as part of the Council's overall borrowing strategy of utilising internal balances to fund part of the capital financing requirement. The Council will constantly monitor this position during the period, especially in light of a rising interest rate environment.

3.23. Authorised Limit

- 3.24. The Council must set and keep under review how much it can afford to borrow from debt or other long-term liabilities for the forthcoming year and at least the following two financial years (the Affordable Borrowing Limit). It must have regard to the Prudential Code and locally determined indicators when setting this limit and be content that the impact upon future Council Taxpayers and Council tenants is acceptable.
- 3.25. Based on the capital programme proposed, it is recommended that the Council approve the following authorised limits and operational boundaries. The undertaking of other long-term liabilities, within the overall limit, is delegated to the Section 151 Officer based on the outcome of financial option appraisals and best value considerations.
- 3.26. The operational boundary remains an internal management tool to monitor borrowing levels and exceeding the boundary would not represent a compliance failure.

<u>Authorised & Operational Borrowing Limits</u>	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate
Authorised limit - borrowing	246.5	268.2	269.1	268.1	267.1
Operational boundary - PFI, leases & right of use assets	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4

Authorised Limit - total external debt	250.9	272.6	273.5	272.5	271.5
Operational Boundary - borrowing	216.3	238.0	238.9	237.9	236.9
Operational Boundary - PFI, leases & right of use assets	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9
Operational Boundary - total external debt	219.2	240.9	241.8	240.8	239.8

3.27. Maturity structure of borrowing

3.28. This indicator is set to control the Authority's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of borrowing will be:

Refinancing rate risk indicator	Upper limit	Lower limit
Under 12 months	60%	0%
12 months and within 24 months	30%	0%
24 months and within 5 years	30%	0%
5 years and within 10 years	30%	0%
10 years and within 20 years	30%	0%
20 years and within 30 years	30%	0%
30 years and within 40 years	30%	0%
40 years and within 50 years	30%	0%
50 years and above	30%	0%

3.29. Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment.

3.30. Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream

3.31. The table below compares the financing costs to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount of income from Council Tax, business rates and general government grants.

Proportion of Financing Costs to net revenue stream	2021/22 Budget	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate
Net Interest payable £m	3.6	3.9	4.1	4.1	4.5
MRP £m	6.4	6.7	7.3	7.6	7.7
Total Financing costs £m	10.0	10.6	11.4	11.7	12.2
Net Revenue Stream (£m)	155.1	168.9	179.3	187.6	196.3
Proportion of net revenue stream %	6.45%	6.29%	6.38%	6.24%	6.21%

3.32. MRP Policy Statement 2022/23

- 3.33. Where the Authority finances capital expenditure by debt, it must put aside resources to repay that debt in later years. The amount charged to the revenue budget for the repayment of debt is known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), although there has been no statutory minimum since 2008. The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Authority to have regard to Welsh Government's Guidance on Minimum Revenue Provision (the WG Guidance) most recently issued in 2018.
- 3.34. The broad aim of the WG Guidance is to ensure that capital expenditure is financed over a period that is either reasonably commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefits, or, in the case of borrowing supported by Government Revenue Support Grant, reasonably commensurate with the period implicit in the determination of that grant.
- 3.35. The WG Guidance requires the Authority to approve an Annual MRP Statement each year and recommends a number of options for calculating a prudent amount of MRP. The following statement only incorporates options recommended in the Guidance.
- 3.36. MRP options recommended in the Guidance include:
- Option 1: Regulatory Method
 - Option 2: CFR Method
 - Option 3: Asset Life Method – based on equal instalments or using an annuity method
 - Option 4: Depreciation Method

Note: This does not preclude other prudent methods.

- 3.37. The following statement only incorporates options recommended in the Guidance.

MRP in 2022/23:

- 3.38. **MRP on Supported Borrowing funded Expenditure:** The Authority's policy is to apply Option 3, the Asset life method in respect of supported capital expenditure funded from borrowing. The charge will be based on 2% per annum, equivalent to equal instalments over a 50 year life.
- 3.39. **MRP on Unsupported Borrowing funded Expenditure:** The Authority's policy is to apply Option 3, the Asset life method in respect of unsupported capital expenditure funded from borrowing. The MRP is calculated on an annuity basis within the asset life method, whereby the MRP element increases over time to reflect a consistent charge over life of the assets taking into account the real value of money. The first MRP charge will be in the year after the asset becomes operational. MRP on purchases of freehold land will be charged over 50 years. MRP on expenditure not related to fixed assets but which has been capitalised by regulation or direction will be charged over 20 years. These lives may be reduced if it is prudent to do so because the resultant income stream or useful life to the Authority is shorter.

- 3.40. **MRP in respect of leases and PFI:** For assets acquired by leases or Private Finance Initiative, MRP will be determined as being equal to the element of the rent or charge that goes to write down the balance sheet liability.
- 3.41. Where former operating leases are potentially brought onto the balance sheet on 1st April 2022 due to the adoption of the IFRS 16 Leases accounting standard, and the asset values have been adjusted for accruals, prepayments, premiums and/or discounts, then the annual MRP charges will be adjusted so that the total charge to revenue remains unaffected by the new standard.
- 3.42. For capital expenditure loans to third parties that are repaid in annual or more frequent instalments of principal, the Council may make nil MRP, but will instead apply the capital receipts arising from principal repayments to reduce the capital financing requirement instead. In years where there is no principal repayment, MRP will be charged in accordance with the MRP policy for the assets funded by the loan, including where appropriate, delaying MRP until the year after the assets become operational. While this is not one of the options in the WG Guidance, it is thought to be a prudent approach since it ensures that the capital expenditure incurred in the loan is fully funded over the life of the assets.
- 3.43. Capital expenditure incurred during 2022/23 will not be subject to an MRP charge until 2023/24. The 2022/23 budget proposals reflect these outlined positions.

4. Treasury investments

Investment strategy

- 4.1. The Authority holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. In the past 12 months, the Authority's treasury investment balance has ranged between £10.5m and £53.2m million, and similar levels are expected to be maintained in the forthcoming year.
- 4.2. Loans to organisations providing local public services and purchases of investment property are not considered to be treasury investments, and these are therefore covered separately in **Appendix 4**.
- 4.3. **Objectives:** Both the CIPFA Code and the WG Guidance require the Authority to invest its treasury funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return, or yield. The Authority's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income. Where balances are expected to be invested for more than one year, the Authority will aim to achieve a total return that is equal or higher than the prevailing rate of inflation, in order to maintain the spending power of the sum invested.

- 4.4. **Negative interest rates:** The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk that the Bank of England will set its Bank Rate at or below zero, which is likely to feed through to negative interest rates on all low risk, short-term investment options. Since investments cannot pay negative income, negative rates will be applied by reducing the value of investments. In this event, security will be measured as receiving the contractually agreed amount at maturity, even though this may be less than the amount originally invested.
- 4.5. **Strategy:** Given the increasing risk and very low returns from short-term unsecured bank investments, the Authority will look to increase its diversification into higher yielding asset classes, such as pooled funds, during 2022/23. The Authority continues to hold £10m of investments to meet the requirements of a professional client under the Mifid II regulations (Markets in financial instruments directive) and therefore consideration will be given to investing this balance with a more medium to long term outlook. At the time of writing £4m was held in Pooled Funds investments with plans to invest a further £2m by the end of the 2021/22 financial year.
- 4.6. **Business models:** Under the new IFRS 9 standard, the accounting for certain investments depends on the Authority's "business model" for managing them. The Authority aims to achieve value from its treasury investments by a business model of collecting the contractual cash flows and therefore, where other criteria are also met, these investments will continue to be accounted for at amortised cost.
- 4.7. **Approved counterparties:** The Authority may invest its surplus funds with any of the counterparty types in table 3 below, subject to the limits shown.

Table 3: Treasury investment counterparties and limits

Sector	Time limit	Counterparty limit	Sector limit
The UK Government	50 years	Unlimited	Unlimited
Local authorities & other government entities	5 years	£4m	Unlimited
Secured investments *	5 years	£4m	75%
Banks (unsecured) *	13 months	£2m (£3m total for the Councils operational bank)	50%
Building societies (unsecured) *	13 months	£2m	50%
Registered providers (e.g. Housing Associations (unsecured) *)	5 years	£2m	50%
Money market funds *	n/a	£4m	Unlimited
Strategic pooled funds	n/a	£5m	£10m
Real estate investment trusts	n/a	£5m	£10m
Other Investments	13 months	£2m	£5m

Credit rating	Banks unsecured	Banks secured	Government	Corporates
UK Govt	n/a	n/a	£ Unlimited 50 years	n/a
AAA	£3m 13 months	£4m 5 years	n/a	£4m 5 years
AA+	£3m 13 months	£4m 5 years	n/a	£4m 5 years
AA	£3m 13 months	£4m 5 years	n/a	£4m 5 years
AA-	£3m 13 months	£4m 3 years	n/a	£4m 3 years
A+	£3m 13 months	£4m 2 years	n/a	£4m 2 years
A	£3m 13 months	£4m 2 years	n/a	£4m 2 years
A-	£3m 13 months	£4m 13 months	n/a	£4m 13 months

This table must be read in conjunction with the notes below

*** Minimum credit rating:** Treasury investments in the sectors marked with an asterisk will only be made with entities whose lowest published long-term credit rating is no lower than [A-]. Where available, the credit rating relevant to the specific investment or class of investment is used, otherwise the counterparty credit rating is used. However, investment decisions are never made solely based on credit ratings, and all other relevant factors including external advice will be taken into account.

Government: Loans to, and bonds and bills issued or guaranteed by, national governments, regional and local authorities and multilateral development banks. These investments are not subject to bail-in, and there is generally a lower risk of insolvency, although they are not zero risk. Investments with the UK Government are deemed to be zero credit risk due to its ability to create additional currency and therefore may be made in unlimited amounts for up to 50 years.

Secured investments: Investments secured on the borrower's assets, which limits the potential losses in the event of insolvency. The amount and quality of the security will be a key factor in the investment decision. Covered bonds and reverse repurchase agreements with banks and building societies are exempt from bail-in. Where there is no investment specific credit rating, but the collateral upon which the investment is secured has a credit rating, the higher of the collateral credit rating and the counterparty

credit rating will be used. The combined secured and unsecured investments with any one counterparty will not exceed the cash limit for secured investments.

Banks and building societies (unsecured): Accounts, deposits, certificates of deposit and senior unsecured bonds with banks and building societies, other than multilateral development banks. These investments are subject to the risk of credit loss via a bail-in should the regulator determine that the bank is failing or likely to fail. See below for arrangements relating to operational bank accounts.

Registered providers (unsecured): Loans to, and bonds issued or guaranteed by, registered providers of social housing or registered social landlords, formerly known as housing associations. These bodies are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (in England), the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Welsh Government and the Department for Communities (in Northern Ireland). As providers of public services, they retain the likelihood of receiving government support if needed.

Money market funds: Pooled funds that offer same-day or short notice liquidity and very low or no price volatility by investing in short-term money markets. They have the advantage over bank accounts of providing wide diversification of investment risks, coupled with the services of a professional fund manager in return for a small fee. Although no sector limit applies to money market funds, the Authority will take care to diversify its liquid investments over a variety of providers to ensure access to cash at all times.

Strategic pooled funds: Bond, equity and property funds that offer enhanced returns over the longer term but are more volatile in the short term. These allow the Authority to diversify into asset classes other than cash without the need to own and manage the underlying investments. Because these funds have no defined maturity date, but are available for withdrawal after a notice period, their performance and continued suitability in meeting the Authority's investment objectives will be monitored regularly.

Real estate investment trusts: Shares in companies that invest mainly in real estate and pay the majority of their rental income to investors in a similar manner to pooled property funds. As with property funds, REITs offer enhanced returns over the longer term, but are more volatile especially as the share price reflects changing demand for the shares as well as changes in the value of the underlying properties.

Other investments: This category covers treasury investments not listed above, for example unsecured corporate bonds and company loans. Non-bank companies cannot be bailed-in but can become insolvent placing the Authority's investment at risk.

Operational bank accounts: The Authority may incur operational exposures, for example through current accounts, collection accounts and merchant acquiring services, to its own banker. These are not classed as investments but are still subject to the risk of a bank bail-in, and balances will therefore be limited to £3m. The Bank of England has stated that in the event of failure, banks with assets greater than £25 billion are more likely to be bailed-in than made insolvent, increasing the chance of the Authority maintaining operational continuity.

4.8. **Risk assessment and credit ratings:** Credit ratings are obtained and monitored by the Authority's treasury advisers, who will notify changes in ratings as they occur. The credit rating agencies in current use are listed in the Treasury Management Practices document. Where an entity has its credit rating downgraded so that it fails to meet the approved investment criteria then:

- no new investments will be made,
- any existing investments that can be recalled or sold at no cost will be, and

- full consideration will be given to the recall or sale of all other existing investments with the affected counterparty.
- 4.9. Where a credit rating agency announces that a credit rating is on review for possible downgrade (also known as “negative watch”) so that it may fall below the approved rating criteria, then only investments that can be withdrawn on the next working day will be made with that organisation until the outcome of the review is announced. This policy will not apply to negative outlooks, which indicate a long-term direction of travel rather than an imminent change of rating.
- 4.10. **Other information on the security of investments:** The Authority understands that credit ratings are good, but not perfect, predictors of investment default. Full regard will therefore be given to other available information on the credit quality of the organisations in which it invests, including credit default swap prices, financial statements, information on potential government support, reports in the quality financial press and analysis and advice from the Authority’s treasury management adviser. No investments will be made with an organisation if there are substantive doubts about its credit quality, even though it may otherwise meet the above criteria.
- 4.11. When deteriorating financial market conditions affect the creditworthiness of all organisations, as happened in 2008 and 2020, this is not generally reflected in credit ratings, but can be seen in other market measures. In these circumstances, the Authority will restrict its investments to those organisations of higher credit quality and reduce the maximum duration of its investments to maintain the required level of security. The extent of these restrictions will be in line with prevailing financial market conditions. If these restrictions mean that insufficient commercial organisations of high credit quality are available to invest the Authority’s cash balances, then the surplus will be deposited with the UK Government, or with other local authorities. This will cause investment returns to fall but will protect the principal sum invested.
- 4.12. **Investment limits:** The Authority’s revenue reserves available to cover investment losses are forecast to be £20.0m on 31st March 2022. In order that no more than 25% of available reserves will be put at risk in the case of a single default, the maximum that will be lent to any one organisation (other than the UK Government) will be £5m. A group of entities under the same ownership will be treated as a single organisation for limit purposes.
- 4.13. Limits are also placed on fund managers, investments in brokers’ nominee accounts and foreign countries as below. Investments in pooled funds and multilateral development banks do not count against the limit for any single foreign country, since the risk is diversified over many countries.

Table 4: Additional investment limits

	Cash limit
Any group of pooled funds under the same management	£5m per manager
Negotiable instruments held in a broker’s nominee account	£5m per broker
Foreign countries	£4m per country

- 4.14. **Liquidity management:** The Authority is a net borrower and does not have an overdraft set up due to the high cost to do so. The treasury team maintain a cashflow model which calculates the net cashflow movements expected per year based on the capital medium term financial plan and informs the timing and amount of any longer term investment and borrowing decisions. The aim of short term liquidity management is to borrow only when the need arises and therefore to minimise net borrowing costs. The amount of investments, with duration over one day, held at any one time is a balance between increased returns and the time taken/dealing costs of identifying and implementing those investments.

Investment prudential indicators

- 4.15. The Authority measures and manages its exposures to treasury management risks using the following indicators.
- 4.16. **Security:** The Authority has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating / credit score of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

Credit risk indicator	Target
Portfolio average credit rating / score	A- / 5.0

5. Related matters

- 5.1. The CIPFA Code requires the Authority to include the following in its treasury management strategy:
- 5.2. **Financial derivatives:** In the absence of any explicit legal power to do so, the Authority will not use standalone financial derivatives (such as swaps, forwards, futures and options). Derivatives embedded into loans and investments, including pooled funds and forward starting transactions, may be used, and the risks that they present will be managed in line with the overall treasury risk management strategy.
- 5.3. **Markets in Financial Instruments Directive:** The Authority has opted up to professional client status with its providers of financial services, including advisers, banks, brokers and fund managers, allowing it access to a greater range of services but without the greater regulatory protections afforded to individuals and small companies. Given the size and range of the Authority's treasury management activities, the Section 151 officer or deputy believes this to be the most appropriate status.

- 5.4. **Government Guidance:** Further matters required by the WG Guidance are included in Appendix 4.

Financial Implications

- 5.5. The budget for investment income in 2022/23 is £134k, based on an average investment portfolio of £10m. The majority of returns are expected to come from pooled fund investments with returns from Government or secured/unsecured investments expected to be negligible. The budget for debt interest paid in 2022/23 is £3.95m, based on an average debt portfolio of £169.7m at an average interest rate of 2.30%. If actual levels of investments and borrowing, or actual interest rates, differ from those forecast, performance against budget will be correspondingly different.

Other Options Considered

- 5.6. The WG Guidance and the CIPFA Code do not prescribe any particular treasury management strategy for local authorities to adopt. The Section 151 officer believes that the above strategy represents an appropriate balance between risk management and cost effectiveness. Some alternative strategies, with their financial and risk management implications, are listed below.

Alternative	Impact on income and expenditure	Impact on risk management
Invest in a narrower range of counterparties and/or for shorter times	Interest income will be lower	Lower chance of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be greater
Invest in a wider range of counterparties and/or for longer times	Interest income will be higher	Increased risk of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be smaller
Borrow additional sums at long-term fixed interest rates	Debt interest costs will rise; this is unlikely to be offset by higher investment income	Higher investment balance leading to a higher impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be more certain
Borrow short-term or variable loans instead of long-term fixed rates	Debt interest costs will initially be lower	Increases in debt interest costs will be broadly offset by rising investment income in the medium term, but long-term costs may be less certain
Reduce level of borrowing	Saving on debt interest is likely to exceed lost investment income	Reduced investment balance leading to a lower impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be less certain

6. Additional requirements of Welsh Government Investment Guidance

- 6.1. The Welsh Government (WG) published revised Investment Guidance in November 2019 which places additional reporting requirements upon local authorities that are not integral to this Authority's treasury management processes. The guidance also covers investments that are not part of treasury management, for example investment property and loans to local organisations.
- 6.2. **Contribution:** The Authority's investments contribute to its service delivery objectives and/or to promote wellbeing as follows:
- treasury management investments support effective treasury management activities,
 - loans to local organisations provide financial support to those organisations to enable them to deliver local public services that would otherwise be provided directly by the Authority, and
 - investment property provides a net financial surplus that is reinvested into local public services and supports economic regeneration.
- 6.3. **Climate change:** The Authority's investment decisions consider long-term climate risks to support a low carbon economy in line with its declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019. Transition towards Net Zero – We need to increase the pace with which we are decarbonising our own operations while developing guidance and support to help individuals and businesses reduce their own emissions. We updated our decarbonisation action plan in November 2021 and will be working on a more ambitious programme which will be published in 2022.
- 6.4. **Specified investments:** The WG Guidance defines specified investments as those:
- denominated in pound sterling,
 - due to be repaid within 12 months of arrangement unless the counterparty is a local authority,
 - not defined as capital expenditure by legislation, and
 - invested with one of:
 - the UK Government,
 - a UK local authority, parish council or community council, or
 - a body or investment scheme of "high credit quality".
- 6.5. The Authority defines "high credit quality" organisations and securities as those having a credit rating of A- or higher that are domiciled in the UK or a foreign country with a sovereign rating of AA+ or higher. For money market funds and other pooled funds "high credit quality" is defined as those having a credit rating of [A-] or higher.
- 6.6. **Loans:** The WG Guidance defines a loan as a written or oral agreement where the authority temporarily transfers cash to a third party, joint venture, subsidiary or associate who agrees a return according to the terms and conditions of receiving the loan, except where the third party is another local authority.

- 6.7. A local authority may choose to make loans & other investments in local enterprises, local charities, wholly owned companies and joint ventures where relevant to Council functions and to promote local economic growth.
- 6.8. The Authority uses an allowed 'expected credit loss' model for loans and receivables as set out in *International Financial Reporting Standard 9 Financial Instruments* as adopted by proper practices to measure the credit risk of its loan portfolio. Appropriate consideration is given to state aid rules and competition law. The Authority has appropriate credit control arrangements to recover overdue repayments in place.
- 6.9. **Non-specified investments:** Any financial investment not meeting the definition of a specified investment or a loan is classed as non-specified. Given the wide definition of a loan, this category only applies to units in pooled funds and shares in companies.
- 6.10. **Non-financial investments:** This category covers non-financial assets held primarily or partially to generate a profit, primarily investment property. Security is determined by comparing each asset's purchase price to its fair value using the model in International Accounting Standard 40: Investment Property as adapted by proper practices. The Authority's current Investment Property portfolio is divided into long held Investment Properties such as County Farms and the three more recently acquired commercial Investment Properties which support economic regeneration.
- 6.11. The total of the Authorities usable reserves at 31st March 2021 was £32.8m. This represents 107% of the current value of the Authorities Commercial Investment Properties acquired to date. Due to the due diligence process undertaken before Commercial Investments are entered into and the forecast income over the lifetime of the assets, these investments are considered to be prudent by the Authority.
- 6.12. **Liquidity:** The Authority's liquidity management has been detailed in the main Treasury report with regard to treasury activities. Before supporting local entities or placing a commercial investment the impact on liquidity is fully addressed, most commonly by taking out loans of an appropriate maturity to ensure funds are available for the life of the activity. £40,000 of seed funding was placed with SRS Ltd in 2011/12 with the intention of it remaining there for the long term to support that entity.
- 6.13. Compared with other investment types, property is relatively difficult to sell and convert to cash at short notice and can take a considerable period to sell in certain market conditions. To ensure that the invested funds can be accessed when they are needed, for example to repay capital borrowed, the Authority will follow its Investment strategy for Commercial assets which ensures that any borrowed capital will be repaid with annual income earned from the investment or that an exit strategy identified during the due diligence will be followed.
- 6.14. **Yield (net profit):** The Authority utilises its profit generating investment activity to achieve a balanced revenue budget. Table 1 below details the proportion of treasury & property rental income to the net revenue budget and therefore its contribution to meeting the costs of

delivery of the Authorities primary functions. Any Authority wide shortfall, including shortfalls resulting from lower than budgeted returns from Investments, will be addressed as part of that process to bring the Authority's outturn position back to a balanced position.

Table 5: Proportionality of Investments

	2021/22 Budget	2022/23 Budget	2023/24 Budget	2024/25 Budget	2025/26 Budget
Net direct cost of services	171.9	185.8	195.7	203.8	212.2
Investment income	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3
Proportion	1.9%	1.8%	1.7%	1.6%	1.6%

- 6.15. **Investment advisers:** The Authority has appointed Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers with the current contract running until 31st March 2022, and has used Alder King as advisers for the last two Commercial investment Property Acquisitions. The quality of these services is controlled by the Finance and Estates teams and also the Investment Committee appointed to oversee the Commercial Investments.
- 6.16. **Borrowing in advance of need:** Welsh Government guidance is that local authorities must not borrow more than or in advance of their needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. The Authority, after having regard to the provisions in this guidance has entered into its commercial investments utilising Local Authority investment powers, which allow for the prudent management of its financial affairs where carried out reasonably and in accordance with an authority's primary function to serve the public. Returns from commercial investments help to ensure there are sufficient funds to continue to provide public services and promote economic regeneration.
- 6.17. **Capacity and skills:** The Section 151 officer is responsible for ensuring that those elected members and statutory officers involved in the investment decision making process have appropriate capacity, skills and information to enable them to:
- take informed decisions as to whether to enter into a specific investment;
 - assess individual investments in the context of the strategic objectives and risk profile of the local authority; and
 - understand how the quantum of these decisions have changed the overall risk exposure of the local authority.
- 6.18. The Governance & Audit Committee has a delegated responsibility to scrutinise the treasury management activity of the Authority, which ensures that elected members have the necessary opportunity to assess whether officers are operating within the boundaries of both the prudential framework and the internal boundaries approved within the treasury strategy. The Governance & Audit Committee is provided with training by the Authority's Treasury Management advisers periodically and have been presented with a questionnaire to assess further training requirements

- 6.19. **Commercial deals:** The investment committee is responsible for ensuring that those tasked with negotiating commercial deals have the appropriate skills and access to information to allow them to operate with regard to the principles of the prudential framework and regulatory regime within which the Authority operates.

7. Advisors Economic & Interest Rate Forecast – December 2021

- The global recovery from the pandemic has entered a more challenging phase. The resurgence in demand has led to the expected rise in inflationary pressure, but disrupted factors of supply are amplifying the effects, increasing the likelihood of lower growth rates ahead. The advent of the Omicron variant of coronavirus is affecting activity and is also a reminder of the potential downside risks.
- Despite relatively buoyant activity survey data, official GDP data indicates that growth was weakening into Q4 2021. Other data, however, suggested continued momentum, particularly for November. Retail sales volumes rose 1.4%, PMIs increased, and the labour market continued to strengthen. The end of furlough did not appear to have had a significant impact on unemployment. Wage growth is elevated.
- The CPI inflation rate rose to 5.1% for November and will rise higher in the near term. While the transitory factors affecting inflation are expected to unwind over time, policymakers' concern is persistent medium term price pressure.
- These factors prompted the MPC to raise Bank Rate to 0.25% at the December meeting. Short term interest rate expectations remain elevated.
- The outlook, however, appears weaker. Household spending faces pressures from a combination of higher prices and tax rises. In the immediate term, the Omicron variant has already affected growth – Q4 and Q1 activity could be weak at best.
- Longer-term government bond yields remain relatively low despite the more hawkish signals from the BoE and the Federal Reserve. Investors are concerned that significant policy tightening in the near term will slow growth and prompt the need for looser policy later. Geo-political and coronavirus risks are also driving safe haven buying. The result is a much flatter yield curve, as short-term yields rise even as long-term yields fall.
- The rise in Bank Rate despite the Omicron variant signals that the MPC will act to bring inflation down whatever the environment. It has also made clear its intentions to tighten policy further. While the economic outlook will be challenging, the signals from policymakers suggest their preference is to tighten policy unless data indicates a more severe slowdown.

Forecast:

- The MPC will want to build on the strong message it delivered this month by tightening policy despite Omicron uncertainty.
- Arlingclose therefore expects Bank Rate to rise to 0.50% in Q1 2022, but then remain there. Risks to the forecast are initially weighted to the upside, but becoming more balanced over time. The Arlingclose central forecast remains below the market forward curve.

- Gilt yields will remain broadly flat from current levels. Yields have fallen sharply at the longer end of the yield curve, but expectations of a rise in Bank Rate have maintained short term gilt yields at higher levels.
- Easing expectations for Bank Rate over time could prompt the yield curve to steepen, as investors build in higher inflation expectations.
- The risks around the gilt yield forecasts vary. The risk for short and medium term yields is initially on the upside but shifts lower later. The risk for long-term yields is weighted to the upside.

	Current	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24
Official Bank Rate													
Upside risk	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Arlingclose Central Case	0.50	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50
3-month money market rate													
Upside risk	0.00	0.05	0.20	0.35	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Arlingclose Central Case	0.50	0.85	1.20	1.25	1.15	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.25	-0.30	-0.30	-0.30	-0.35	-0.45	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50
5yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.35	0.45	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55
Arlingclose Central Case	1.22	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.15	1.15	1.15	1.15	1.15	1.15
Downside risk	0.00	-0.20	-0.25	-0.25	-0.30	-0.35	-0.40	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50
10yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.40	0.45	0.55	0.60	0.65	0.65	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70
Arlingclose Central Case	1.37	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.35
Downside risk	0.00	-0.20	-0.30	-0.35	-0.40	-0.45	-0.50	-0.55	-0.55	-0.55	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60
20yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.40	0.45	0.50	0.55	0.60	0.60	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65
Arlingclose Central Case	1.54	1.55	1.55	1.55	1.55	1.55	1.55	1.55	1.55	1.55	1.55	1.55	1.55
Downside risk	0.00	-0.30	-0.35	-0.40	-0.40	-0.45	-0.45	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50
50yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.40	0.45	0.50	0.55	0.60	0.60	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65
Arlingclose Central Case	1.22	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20
Downside risk	0.00	-0.30	-0.35	-0.40	-0.40	-0.45	-0.45	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50

PWLB Standard Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 1.00%

PWLB Certainty Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 0.80%

8. Glossary of treasury terms

Authorised Limit	<p>The affordable borrowing limit determined in compliance with the Local Government Act 2003 (English and Welsh authorities) and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. This Prudential Indicator is a statutory limit for total external debt. It is set by the Authority and needs to be consistent with the Authority's plans for capital expenditure financing and funding. The Authorised Limit provides headroom over and above the <i>Operational Boundary</i> to accommodate expected cash movements. Affordability and prudence are matters which must be taken into account when setting this limit.</p> <p>(see also <i>Operational Boundary</i>, below)</p>
-------------------------	--

Balances and Reserves	Accumulated sums that are maintained either earmarked for specific future costs or commitments or generally held to meet unforeseen or emergency expenditure.
Bail-in	Refers to the process which the banking regulatory authorities will use to restructure a financial institution which is failing or likely to fail. Unsecured creditors of and investors in that financial institution will participate in its restructure who will, as a consequence, incur a non-recoverable loss (commonly referred to as a 'haircut') on their obligation/investment. Local authority investments with banks and building societies such as term deposits, certificates of deposit, call accounts and non-collateralised bonds are unsecured investments and are therefore vulnerable to bail-in.
Bank Rate	The official interest rate set by the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee and what is generally termed at the "base rate". This rate is also referred to as the 'repo rate'.
Bond	A certificate of debt issued by a company, government, or other institution. The bond holder receives interest at a rate stated at the time of issue of the bond. The price of a bond may vary during its life.
Capital Expenditure	Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of capital assets
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	The Council's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes representing the cumulative capital expenditure of the local authority that has not been financed.
Capital growth	Increase in the value of the asset (in the context of a collective investment scheme, it will be the increase in the unit price of the fund)
Capital receipts	Money obtained on the sale of a capital asset.
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
Constant Net Asset Value (CNAV)	Also referred to as Stable Net Asset Value. A term used in relation to the valuation of 1 share in a fund. This means that at all times the value of 1 share is £1/€1/US\$1 (depending on the currency of the fund). The Constant NAV is maintained since dividend income (or interest) is either added to the shareholders' account by creating shares equal to the value of interest earned or paid to the shareholder's bank account, depending on which option is selected by the shareholder.
Collective Investment Schemes	Funds in which several investors collectively hold units or shares. The assets in the fund are not held directly by each investor, but as part of a pool (hence these funds are also referred to as 'Pooled Funds'). Unit Trusts and Open-Ended Investment Companies are types of collective investment schemes / pooled funds.
Corporate Bonds	Corporate bonds are bonds issued by companies. The term is often used to cover all bonds other than those issued by governments in their own currencies and includes issues by companies, supranational organisations and government agencies.

Corporate Bond Funds	Collective Investment Schemes investing predominantly in bonds issued by companies and supranational organisations.
CPI <i>Also see RPI</i>	Consumer Price Index. (This measure is used as the Bank of England's inflation target.)
Credit Default Swap (CDS)	A Credit Default Swap is similar to an insurance policy against a credit default. Both the buyer and seller of a CDS are exposed to credit risk. Naked CDS, i.e. one which is not linked to an underlying security, can lead to speculative trading.
Credit Rating	Formal opinion by a registered rating agency of a counterparty's future ability to meet its financial liabilities; these are opinions only and not guarantees.
Cost of carry	When a loan is borrowed in advance of requirement, this is the difference between the interest rate and (other associated costs) on the loan and the income earned from investing the cash in the interim.
Credit default swaps	Financial instrument for swapping the risk of debt default; the buyer effectively pays a premium against the risk of default.
Diversification / diversified exposure	The spreading of investments among different types of assets or between markets in order to reduce risk.
Derivatives	Financial instruments whose value, and price, are dependent on one or more underlying assets. Derivatives can be used to gain exposure to, or to help protect against, expected changes in the value of the underlying investments. Derivatives may be traded on a regulated exchange or traded 'over the counter'.
ECB	European Central Bank
Federal Reserve	The US central bank. (Often referred to as "the Fed")
Floating Rate Notes	A bond issued by a company where the interest rate paid on the bond changes at set intervals (generally every 3 months). The rate of interest is linked to LIBOR and may therefore increase or decrease at each rate setting
GDP	Gross domestic product - also termed as "growth" in the economy. The value of the national aggregate production of goods and services in the economy.
General Fund	This includes most of the day-to-day spending and income. (All spending and income related to the management and maintenance of the housing stock is kept separately in the HRA).
Gilts (UK Govt)	Gilts are bonds issued by the UK Government. They take their name from 'gilt-edged': being issued by the UK government, they are deemed to be very secure as the investor expects to receive the full face value of the bond to be repaid on maturity.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	A ring-fenced account of all housing income and expenditure, required by statute
IFRS	International Financial Reporting Standards
Income Distribution	The payment made to investors from the income generated by a fund; such a payment can also be referred to as a 'dividend'
Investments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secured - unsecured 	<p>Secured investments which have underlying collateral in the form of assets which can be called upon in the event of default</p> <p>Unsecured investments do not have underlying collateral. Such investments made by local authorities with banks and building societies are at risk of bail-in should the regulator determine that the bank is failing or likely to fail.</p>
Liability Benchmark	Term in CIPFA's Risk Management Toolkit which refers to the minimum amount of borrowing required to keep investments at a minimum liquidity level (which may be zero).
LOBOs	LOBO stands for 'Lender's Option Borrower's Option'. The underlying loan facility is typically long term and the interest rate is fixed. However, in the LOBO facility the lender has the option to call on the facilities at predetermined future dates. On these call dates, the lender can propose or impose a new fixed rate for the remaining term of the facility and the borrower has the 'option' to either accept the new imposed fixed rate or repay the loan facility.
LVNAV (Low Volatility Net Asset Value)	From 2019 Money Market Funds will have to operate under a variable Net Value Structure with minimal volatility (fluctuations around £1 limited to between 99.8p to 100.2p)
Maturity	The date when an investment or borrowing is repaid.
Maturity profile	A table or graph showing the amount (or percentage) of debt or investments maturing over a time period. The amount or percent maturing could be shown on a year-by-year or quarter-by-quarter or month-by-month basis.
MiFID II	MiFID II replaced the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID I) from 3 January 2018. It is a legislative framework instituted by the European Union to regulate financial markets in the bloc and improve protections for investors.
Money Market Funds (MMF)	Pooled funds which invest in a range of short term assets providing high credit quality and high liquidity.
Minimum Revenue Provision	An annual provision that the Authority is statutorily required to set aside and charge to the Revenue Account for the repayment of debt associated with expenditure incurred on capital assets

Non-Specified Investments	Term used in the Communities and Local Government Guidance and Welsh Assembly Guidance for Local Authority Investments. It includes any investment for periods greater than one year or those with bodies that do not have a high credit rating, use of which must be justified.
Net Asset Value (NAV)	A fund's net asset value is calculated by taking the current value of the fund's assets and subtracting its liabilities.
Operational Boundary	This is the limit set by the Authority as its most likely, i.e. prudent, estimate level of external debt, but not the worst case scenario. This limit links directly to the Authority's plans for capital expenditure, the estimates of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) and the estimate of cashflow requirements for the year.
Permitted Investments	Term used by Scottish Authorities as those the Authority has formally approved for use.
Pooled funds	See Collective Investment Schemes (above)
Premiums and Discounts	<p>In the context of local authority borrowing, (a) the premium is the penalty arising when a loan is redeemed prior to its maturity date and (b) the discount is the gain arising when a loan is redeemed prior to its maturity date. If on a £1 million loan, it is calculated* that a £100,000 premium is payable on premature redemption, then the amount paid by the borrower to redeem the loan is £1,100,000 plus accrued interest. If on a £1 million loan, it is calculated that a £100,000 discount receivable on premature redemption, then the amount paid by the borrower to redeem the loan is £900,000 plus accrued interest.</p> <p>PWLB premium/discount rates are calculated according to the length of time to maturity, current market rates (plus a margin), and the existing loan rate which then produces a premium/discount dependent on whether the discount rate is lower/higher than the coupon rate.</p> <p>*The calculation of the total amount payable to redeem a loan borrowed from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) is the present value of the remaining payments of principal and interest due in respect of the loan being repaid prematurely, calculated on normal actuarial principles. More details are contained in the PWLB's lending arrangements circular.</p>
Private Finance Initiative (PFI)	Private Finance Initiative (PFI) provides a way of funding major capital investments, without immediate recourse to the public purse. Private consortia, usually involving large construction firms, are contracted to design, build, and in some cases manage new projects. Contracts can typically last for 30 years, during which time the asset is leased by a public authority.
Prudential Code	Developed by CIPFA and introduced on 01/4/2004 as a professional code of practice to support local authority capital investment planning within a clear, affordable, prudent and sustainable framework and in accordance with good professional practice.
Prudential Indicators	Indicators determined by the local authority to define its capital expenditure and asset management framework. They are designed to support and record local decision making in a manner that is publicly accountable; they are not intended to be comparative performance indicators between authorities.

PWLB	Public Works Loans Board. It is a statutory body operating within the United Kingdom Debt Management Office, an Executive Agency of HM Treasury. The PWLB's function is to lend money from the National Loans Fund to local authorities and other prescribed bodies, and to collect the repayments.
Quantitative Easing	In relation to the UK, it is the process used by the Bank of England to directly increase the quantity of money in the economy. It “does not involve printing more banknotes. Instead, the Bank buys assets from private sector institutions - that could be insurance companies, pension funds, banks or non-financial firms - and credits the seller’s bank account. So the seller has more money in their bank account, while their bank holds a corresponding claim against the Bank of England (known as reserves). The end result is more money out in the wider economy”. Source: Bank of England
Registered Provider of Social Housing	Formerly known as Housing Association
Revenue Expenditure	Expenditure to meet the continuing cost of delivery of services including salaries and wages, the purchase of materials and capital financing charges
RPI	Retail Prices Index. A monthly index demonstrating the movement in the cost of living as it tracks the prices of goods and services including mortgage interest and rent. Pensions and index-linked gilts are uprated using the CPI index.
SORP	Statement of Recommended Practice for Accounting (Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom).
Specified Investments	Term used in the CLG Guidance and Welsh Assembly Guidance for Local Authority Investments. Investments that offer high security and high liquidity, in sterling and for no more than 1 year. UK government, local authorities and bodies that have a high credit rating.
Supported Borrowing	Borrowing for which the costs are supported by the government or third party.
Supranational Bonds	Instruments issued by supranational organisations created by governments through international treaties (often called multilateral development banks). The bonds carry an AAA rating in their own right. Examples of supranational organisations are those issued by the European Investment Bank, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.
Treasury Management Code	CIPFA’s Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services. The current Code is the edition released in autumn 2011.
Temporary Borrowing	Borrowing to cover peaks and troughs of cash flow, not to fund spending.
Term Deposits	Deposits of cash with terms attached relating to maturity and rate of return (interest)

Unsupported Borrowing	Borrowing which is self-financed by the local authority. This is also sometimes referred to as Prudential Borrowing.
Usable Reserves	Resources available to finance future revenue and capital expenditure
Variable Net Asset Value (VNAV)	A term used in relation to the valuation of 1 share in a fund. This means that the net asset value (NAV) of these funds is calculated daily based on market prices.
Working Capital	Timing differences between income/expenditure and receipts/payments
Yield	The measure of the return on an investment instrument