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Chairman and Members of the Audit and Governance Committee	Your contact:	William Troop
	Tel:	01279 502173
	Date:	3 February 2021

cc. All other recipients of the Audit and Governance Committee agenda

Dear Councillor,

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - 10 FEBRUARY 2021

Please find attached the following reports which were marked "to follow" on the agenda for the above meeting:

7. Investment Strategy 2021/22 (Pages 3 - 64)
8. Capital Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2021/22 (Pages 65 - 128)

Please bring these papers with you to the meeting next Wednesday.

Yours faithfully,

William Troop
Democratic Services Officer
william.troop@eastherts.gov.uk

MEETING	:	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
VENUE	:	ONLINE MEETING - LIVESTREAMED
DATE	:	WEDNESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2021
TIME	:	8.00 PM, OR AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE JOINT MEETING, WHICHEVER IS LATER

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East Herts Council Report

Audit and Governance Committee

Date: 10 February 2021

Report by: Councillor Geoffrey Williamson, Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

Report title: Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22

Ward(s) affected: None

Summary

The report contains the Council's Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy for 2021/22.

RECOMMENDATION FOR AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:

(a) That Members review and comment on the Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22. *(Appendix A)*

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 This report proposes that Members scrutinise and comment on the Council's Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22.

2.0 Background

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

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

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

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

2.5 This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the

Prudential Code).

2.6 This activity is currently supported by the council's appointed independent advisors – Link Asset Services.

3.0 Reason(s)

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

3.2 Prudential and treasury indicators and treasury strategy (this report) - The first, and most important report is forward looking and covers:

- the capital plans, (including prudential indicators);
- a minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy, (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time);
- the treasury management strategy, (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised), including treasury indicators; and
- an investment strategy, (the parameters on how investments are to be managed).

3.3 A mid-year treasury management report – This is primarily a progress report and will update members on the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and whether any policies require revision.

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

3.5 The above reports are required to be adequately scrutinised before being recommended to the Council.

3.6 Prudential Indicators are included in Appendix 'A': Treasury

Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy 2021-22 which are designed to assist members' overview and confirm capital expenditure plans.

3.7 Please also refer to the Credit and Counterparty Risk Management paragraph 5.4 and Approved Countries List paragraph 5.5.

3.8 For clarity, all the Prudential Indicators and the creditworthiness policy and counterparty limits which Council will be asked to approve are summarised in Appendix B.

4.0 Options

4.1 Update the Treasury Management Strategy as required, at least once annually.

5.0 Risks

5.1 Risks are discussed in detail, within the Treasury Management Strategy, including the uncertainty around future funding, both from Government and other areas.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 No.

Community Safety
No

Data Protection
No

Equalities
No

Environmental Sustainability
The Council's Treasury operations are limited by statute to term

deposits, money market funds and banks. It is not possible to have an ethical investment strategy as there is no way to trace the use of, say, a five day Term Deposit with Barclays Bank who may use that cash to pay customers, some of whom would potentially be seen as unethical, e.g. oil companies, weapons manufacturers etc.

Financial

All financial implications are included in this report.

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

The Council's Treasury operations are limited by statute to term deposits, money market funds and banks. It is not possible to have an ethical investment strategy as there is no way to trace the use of, say, a five day Term Deposit with Barclays Bank who may use that cash to pay customers, some of whom would potentially be seen as unethical, e.g. oil companies, weapons manufacturers etc.

Legal

All statutory requirements have been considered in preparing this report

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A - East Herts District Council Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22 Onwards

7.2 Appendix B - Prudential Indicators 2021/22 for Approval

Contact Member	Councillor Geoffrey Williamson, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability *geoffrey.williamson@eastherts.gov.uk*
Contact Officer	Steven Linnett, Head of Strategic Finance and Property Contact Tel No: 01279 502050 *steven.linnett@eastherts.gov.uk*
Report Author	Nicola Munro, Finance Business Partner Contact Tel No: 01279 502044 *nicola.munro@eastherts.gov.uk*

Appendix A

East Herts Council

Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22

Including commercial activities / non-treasury investments

INDEX

1.INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

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

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

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

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

CIPFA defines treasury management as:

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

1.2 Reporting requirements

1.2.1 Capital Strategy

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

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

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

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

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

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

Where the Council has borrowed to fund any non-treasury investment, there should also be an explanation of why borrowing was required and why the MHCLG Investment Guidance and CIPFA Prudential Code have not been adhered to.

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

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

1.2.2 Treasury Management reporting

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

a. **Prudential and treasury indicators and treasury strategy** (this report) - The first, and most important report is forward looking and covers:
    - the capital plans, (including prudential indicators);
    - a minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy, (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time);
    - the treasury management strategy, (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised), including treasury indicators; and
    - an investment strategy, (the parameters on how investments are to be managed).

b. **A mid-year treasury management report** – This is primarily a progress report and will update members on the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and whether any policies require revision.

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

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

1.3 Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22

The strategy for 2021/22 covers two main areas:

Capital issues

- the capital expenditure plans and the associated prudential indicators;
- the minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy.

Treasury management issues

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

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

1.4 Training

The CIPFA Code requires the responsible officer to ensure that members with responsibility for treasury management receive adequate training in treasury management. This especially applies to members responsible for scrutiny. The following training has been undertaken by members (further training will be arranged, as required):

- 11TH November 2020 - All Member briefing session on refreshed capital business cases (leisure and Hertford Theatre)
- 1st December 2020 and 14th December 2020 - All Member finance training

The training needs of treasury management officers are periodically reviewed.

1.5 Treasury management consultants

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

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

It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented and subjected to regular review. The Head of Strategic Finance & Property intends to conduct a thorough review of the Treasury Advisors and the advice and services actually received against their contract obligations within the next 3 months.

2 THE CAPITAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2021/22 – 2023/24

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

2.1 Capital expenditure

This prudential indicator is a summary of the Council's capital expenditure plans, both those agreed previously, and those forming part of this budget cycle. Members are asked to approve the capital expenditure forecasts:

Capital expenditure	2019/20 Actual £m	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
Services	7.3	32.7	45.8	19.9	7.5
Commercial activities / non-financial investments	3.5	2.2	-	-	-
Total	**10.8**	**34.9**	**45.8**	**19.9**	**7.5**

* Commercial activities / non-financial investments relate to areas such as capital expenditure on investment properties, loans to third parties etc.

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

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

Financing of capital expenditure	2019/20 Actual £m	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
Capital receipts	8.0	-	7.2	1.0	7.1
Capital grants	2.8	7.9	3.4	0.1	-
Revenue	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Net financing need for the year	**4.5**	**26.7**	**35.0**	**18.6**	**0.2**

The net financing need for commercial activities / non-financial investments included in the above table against expenditure is shown below:

Commercial activities / non-financial investments	2019/20 Actual £m	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
Capital Expenditure	4.8	2.2	-	-	-
Financing costs	-	-	-	-	-
Net financing need for the year	**4.8**	**2.2**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Percentage of total net financing need %	107%	8%	-	-	-

As a result of the changes to the PWLB borrowing rules which prohibit investment principally for yield, all investment in Commercial activities have been put on hold, until the Head of Strategic Finance and Property has sort Counsel's advice regarding the activities of the Council's housing company.

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

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

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

The CFR includes any other long-term liabilities (e.g. PFI schemes, finance leases). Whilst these increase the CFR, and therefore the Council's borrowing requirement, these types of scheme include a borrowing facility by the PFI, PPP lease provider and so the Council is not required to separately borrow for these schemes. The Council currently has no such schemes within the CFR.

The Council is asked to approve the CFR projections below

	2019/20 Actual £m	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
Capital Financing Requirement					
CFR – non housing	(24.794)	(0.248)	34.715	53.245	53.400
CFR - Commercial activities/ non-financial investments	5.317	7.502	7.502	7.502	7.502
Total CFR	(19.477)	7.254	42.217	60.747	60.902
Movement in CFR	4.530	26.731	34.963	18.530	0.155

Movement in CFR represented by					
Net financing need for the year (above)	15,330	34,864	45.768	19.888	7.463
Less MRP/VRP and other financing movements	(10.800)	(8.111)	(10.805)	(1.358)	(7.308)
Movement in CFR	**4.530**	**26.731**	**34.963**	**18.530**	**0.155**

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

	2019/20 Actual £m	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
Adjusted Capital Financing Requirement					
CFR – non housing	(68.123)	(16.486)	34.715	53.245	53.400
CFR - Commercial activities/ non-financial investments	5.317	7.502	7.502	7.502	7.502
Total Adjusted CFR	(62.806)	(9.344)	42.217	60.747	60.902
Movement in Adjusted CFR	4,530	26.731	34.963	18.530	0.155

The above table shows the Capital Financing Requirement adjusted to reflect the underlying resources available from set aside capital receipts by adjusting for capital cash on hand which is available only to repay borrowing in accordance with the MRP Policy. The statutory method includes parts of the capital cash and including it effectively cancels out the "over-financing" of assets which the set aside receipt effectively represents.

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2.3 Core funds and expected investment balances

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

Year End Resources	2019/20 Actual £m	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
Fund balances / reserves	16.485	15.411	17.921	16.348	14.761
Capital receipts	-	-	-	-	-
Provisions	2.115	5.500	4.800	3.800	2.800
Other	0.300	-	-	-	-
Total core funds	18.900	20.911	22.721	20.148	17.561
Working capital*	38.000	15.000	3.000	3.000	6.000
Under/over borrowing	1.000	-	-	-	-
Expected investments	**57.900**	**35.911**	**25.721**	**23.148**	**23.561**

2.4 Minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy statement

The full policy statement is published within the Capital Strategy, which is following the same council approval process, as this document.

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

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

For all capital expenditure including that incurred before 1 April 2008 or which in the future will be Supported Capital Expenditure, the MRP policy will be:

- **Asset life method** – MRP will be based on the estimated life of the assets, in accordance with the regulations (this option must be applied for any expenditure capitalised under a Capitalisation Direction) (option 3);

This options provide for a reduction in the borrowing need over approximately the asset's life.

Repayments included in annual PFI or finance leases are applied as MRP.

3 BORROWING

The capital expenditure plans set out in Section 2 provide details of the service activity of the Council. The treasury management function ensures that the Council's cash is organised in accordance with the relevant professional codes, so that sufficient cash is available to meet this service activity and the Council's capital strategy. This will involve both the organisation of the cash flow and, where capital plans require, the organisation of appropriate borrowing facilities. The strategy covers the relevant treasury / prudential indicators, the current and projected debt positions and the annual investment strategy.

3.1 Current portfolio position

The overall treasury management portfolio as at 31 March 2020 and for the position as at 30 November 2020 are shown below for both borrowing and investments.

Treasury Portfolio				
	Actual		Current	
Treasury Investments	**31/03/2020**		**30/11/2020**	
Funds Managed in-house	**£m**	**%**	**£m**	**%**
Banks	23.2	40%	19.1	35%
Building Socities (unrated)				
Building Socities (rated)			6.0	11%
Local Authorities	6.5	11%		
Money Marjet Funds	8.5	15%	9.1	17%
Certificates of Deposit				
Total managed in house	**38.2**	**66%**	**34.2**	**63%**
Funds managed externally				
Bonds				
property funds	20.0	34%	20.0	37%
Total managed externally	**20.0**	**34%**	**20.0**	**37%**
Total treasury investments	**58.2**	**100%**	**54.2**	**100%**
External borrowing	**£m**	**%**	**£m**	**%**
Local Authorities				
Public Works Loans Board	1.5	20%	1.5	100%
Commercial Loans	6.0	80%		
Lender Option Borrower Option Loans (LOBO)				
Total external borrowing	**7.5**	**100%**	**1.5**	**100%**
Net treasury investments / (borrowing)	**50.7**		**52.7**	

The Council's forward projections for borrowing are summarised below. The table shows the actual external debt, against the underlying capital borrowing need, (the Capital Financing Requirement - CFR), highlighting any over or under borrowing.

	2019/20 Actual £m	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
External Debt					
Debt at 1 April	7.5	7.5	34.2	26.0	44.5
Expected change in Debt	-	26.7	(8.2)	18.5	0.2
Other long-term liabilities (OLTL)	-	-	-	-	-
Expected change in OLTL	-	-	-	-	-
Actual gross debt at 31 March	**7.5**	**34.2**	**26.0**	**44.5**	**44.7**
The Capital Financing Requirement	**(19.5)**	**7.3**	**42.2**	**60.7**	**60.9**
Under / (over) borrowing	**(7.5)**	**(26.9)**	**16.2**	**16.2**	**16.2**

Within the above figures the level of debt relating to commercial activities / non-financial investment is nil.

Within the range of prudential indicators there are a number of key indicators to ensure that the Council operates its activities within well-defined limits. One of these is that the Council needs to ensure that its gross debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2021/22 and the following two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years but ensures that borrowing is not undertaken for revenue or speculative purposes.

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

3.2 Treasury Indicators: limits to borrowing activity

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

Operational boundary	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
Debt	20.0	40.0	100.0	100.0
Other long term liabilities	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
Commercial activities/ non-financial investments	10.0	20.0	30.0	30.0
Total	40.0	60.0	140.0	140.0

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

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

Authorised Limit	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
Debt	100.0	150.0	150.0	150.0
Other long term liabilities	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
Commercial activities/ non-financial investments	10.0	30.0	30.0	30.0
Total	120.0	190.0	190.0	190.0

3.3 Prospects for interest rates

The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. Link provided the following forecasts on 11.8.20. However, following the conclusion of the review of PWLB margins over gilt yields on 25.11.20, all forecasts below have been reduced by 1%. These are forecasts for certainty rates, gilt yields plus 80bps:

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

Additional notes by Link on this forecast table: -

- *Please note that we have made a slight change to our interest rate forecasts table above for forecasts for 3, 6 and 12 months. Traditionally, we have used LIBID forecasts, with the rate calculated using market convention of 1/8th (0.125%) taken off the LIBOR figure. Given that all LIBOR rates up to 6m are currently running below 10bps, using that convention would give negative figures as forecasts for those periods. However, the liquidity premium that is still in evidence at the short end of the curve means that the rates actually being achieved by local authority investors are still modestly in positive territory. While there are differences between counterparty offer rates, our analysis would suggest that an average rate of around 10 bps is achievable for 3 months, 10bps for 6 months and 20 bps for 12 months.*
- *During 2021, Link will be continuing to look at market developments in this area and will monitor these with a view to communicating with clients when full financial market agreement is reached on how to replace LIBOR. This is likely to be an iteration of the overnight SONIA rate and the use of compounded rates and Overnight Index Swap (OIS) rates for forecasting purposes.*
- *We will maintain continuity by providing clients with LIBID investment benchmark rates on the current basis.*

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

Gilt yields / PWLB rates

There was much speculation during the second half of 2019 that bond markets were in a bubble which was driving bond prices up and yields down to historically very low levels. The context for that was a heightened expectation that the US could have been heading for a recession in 2020. In addition, there were growing expectations of a downturn in world economic growth, especially due to fears around the impact of the trade war between the US and China, together with inflation generally at low levels in most countries and expected to remain subdued. Combined, these conditions were conducive to very low bond yields. While inflation targeting by the major central banks has been successful over the last thirty years in lowering inflation expectations, the real equilibrium rate for central rates has fallen considerably due to the high level of borrowing by consumers. This means that central banks do not need to raise rates as much now to have a major impact on consumer spending, inflation, etc. The consequence of this has been the gradual lowering of the overall level of interest rates and bond yields in financial markets over the last 30 years. Over the year prior to the coronavirus crisis, this has seen many bond yields up to 10 years turn negative in the Eurozone. In addition, there has, at times, been an inversion of bond yields in the US whereby 10 year yields have fallen below shorter term yields. In the past, this has been a precursor of a recession. The other side of this coin is that bond prices are elevated as investors would be expected to be moving out of riskier assets i.e. shares, in anticipation of a downturn in corporate earnings and so selling out of equities.

Gilt yields had therefore already been on a generally falling trend up until the coronavirus crisis hit western economies during March 2020. After gilt yields spiked up during the financial crisis in March, we have seen these yields fall sharply to unprecedented lows as investors panicked during March in selling shares in anticipation of impending recessions in western economies, and moved cash into safe haven assets i.e. government bonds. However, major western central banks took rapid action to deal with excessive stress in financial markets during March, and started massive quantitative easing purchases of government bonds: this also acted to put downward pressure on government bond yields at a time when there has been a huge and quick expansion of government expenditure financed by issuing government bonds. Such unprecedented levels of issuance in “normal” times would have caused bond yields to rise sharply. Gilt yields and PWLB rates have been at remarkably low rates so far during 2020/21.

As the interest forecast table for PWLB certainty rates above shows, there is expected to be little upward movement in PWLB rates over the next two years as it will take economies, including the UK, a prolonged period to recover all the momentum they have lost in the sharp recession caused during the coronavirus shut down period. From time to time, gilt yields, and therefore PWLB rates, can be subject to exceptional levels of volatility due to geo-political, sovereign debt crisis, emerging market developments and sharp changes in investor sentiment, (as shown on 9th November when the first results of a successful COVID-19 vaccine trial were announced). Such volatility could occur at any time during the forecast period.

Investment and borrowing rates

- **Investment returns** are likely to remain exceptionally low during 2021/22 with little increase in the following two years.

- **Borrowing interest rates** fell to historically very low rates as a result of the COVID crisis and the quantitative easing operations of the Bank of England: indeed, gilt yields up to 6 years were negative during most of the first half of 20/21. The policy of avoiding new borrowing by running down spare cash balances has served local authorities well over the last few years. The unexpected increase of 100 bps in

PWLB rates on top of the then current margin over gilt yields of 80 bps in October 2019, required an initial major rethink of local authority treasury management strategy and risk management. However, in March 2020, the Government started a consultation process for reviewing the margins over gilt rates for PWLB borrowing for different types of local authority capital expenditure. *(Please note that Link has concerns over this approach, as the fundamental principle of local authority borrowing is that borrowing is a treasury management activity and individual sums that are borrowed are not linked to specific capital projects.)* It also introduced the following rates for borrowing for different types of capital expenditure: -

- **PWLB Standard Rate** is gilt plus 200 basis points (G+200bps)
- **PWLB Certainty Rate** is gilt plus 180 basis points (G+180bps)
- **PWLB HRA Standard Rate** is gilt plus 100 basis points (G+100bps)
- **PWLB HRA Certainty Rate** is gilt plus 80bps (G+80bps)
- **Local Infrastructure Rate** is gilt plus 60bps (G+60bps)

- As a consequence of these increases in margins, many local authorities decided to refrain from PWLB borrowing unless it was for HRA or local infrastructure financing, until such time as the review of margins was concluded.

- On 25.11.20, the Chancellor announced the conclusion to the review of margins over gilt yields for PWLB rates; the standard and certainty margins were reduced by 1% but a prohibition was introduced to deny access to borrowing from the PWLB for any local authority which had purchase of assets for yield in its three year capital programme. The new margins over gilt yields are as follows: -.

  - **PWLB Standard Rate** is gilt plus 100 basis points (G+100bps)
  - **PWLB Certainty Rate** is gilt plus 80 basis points (G+80bps)
  - **PWLB HRA Standard Rate** is gilt plus 100 basis points (G+100bps)
  - **PWLB HRA Certainty Rate** is gilt plus 80bps (G+80bps)
  - **Local Infrastructure Rate** is gilt plus 60bps (G+60bps)

- **Borrowing for capital expenditure.** As Link's long-term forecast for Bank Rate is 2.00%, and all PWLB rates are under 2.00%, there is now value in borrowing from the PWLB for all types of capital expenditure for all maturity periods, especially as current rates are at historic lows. However, greater value can be obtained in borrowing for shorter maturity periods so the Council will assess its risk appetite in conjunction with budgetary pressures to reduce total interest costs. Longer-term borrowing could also be undertaken for the purpose of certainty, where that is desirable, or for flattening the profile of a heavily unbalanced maturity profile.

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

3.4 Borrowing strategy

The Council is currently in a negative CFR position. This means that the capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement), has not been reached due to the level of the Council's reserves.

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

- *if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp FALL in borrowing rates,* then long term borrowing will be postponed.

- *if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a much sharper RISE in borrowing rates than that currently forecast,* perhaps arising from an acceleration in the rate of increase in central rates in the USA and UK, an increase in world economic activity, or a sudden increase in inflation risks, then the portfolio position will be re-appraised. Most likely, fixed rate funding will be drawn whilst interest rates are lower than they are projected to be in the next few years.

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

3.5 Policy on borrowing in advance of need

The Council will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be within forward approved Capital Financing Requirement estimates and will be considered carefully to ensure that value for money can be demonstrated and that the Council can ensure the security of such funds.

Risks associated with any borrowing in advance activity will be subject to prior appraisal and subsequent reporting through the mid-year or annual reporting mechanism.

3.6 Debt rescheduling

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

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

3.7 New financial institutions as a source of borrowing and / or types of borrowing

Following the decision by the PWLB on 9.10.19 to increase their margin over gilt yields by 100 bps to 180 basis points on all certainty rate loans lent to local authorities, consideration will need to be given to sourcing funding at cheaper rates from the following in order to finance capital expenditure for non-HRA and infrastructure purposes:

- Local authorities (primarily shorter dated maturities)
- Financial institutions (primarily pension funds but also some banks, out of spot or forward dates)
- Municipal Bonds Agency

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

3.8 Approved Sources of Long and Short term Borrowing

On Balance Sheet	Fixed	Variable
Public Works Loans Board	✓	✓
Municipal Bonds Agency	✓	✓
Local authorities	✓	✓
Banks	✓	✓
Pension funds		
Market (long-term)	✓	✓
Market (temporary)	✓	✓
Local temporary	✓	✓
Local Bonds	✓	✓
Local authority bills	✓	✓
Overdraft		✓
Negotiable Bonds	✓	✓
Internal (capital receipts & revenue balances)	✓	✓
Finance leases	✓	✓

4 ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

4.1 Investment policy – management of risk

The MHCLG and CIPFA have extended the meaning of 'investments' to include both financial and non-financial investments. This report deals solely with financial investments, (as managed by the treasury management team). Non-financial investments, essentially the purchase of income yielding assets, are covered in the Capital Strategy, (a separate report).

The Council's investment policy has regard to the following: -

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

The Council's investment priorities will be security first, portfolio liquidity second and then yield, (return). The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity and with the Council's risk appetite. In the current economic climate it is considered appropriate to keep investments short term to cover cash flow needs. However, where appropriate (from an internal as well as external perspective), the Council will also consider the value available in periods up to 12 months with high credit rated financial institutions, as well as wider range fund options.

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

1. Minimum acceptable **credit criteria** are applied in order to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties. This also enables diversification and thus avoidance of concentration risk. The key ratings used to monitor counterparties are the short term and long-term ratings.

2. **Other information:** ratings will not be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution; it is important to continually assess and monitor the financial sector on both a micro and macro basis and in relation to the economic and political environments in which institutions operate. The assessment will also take account of information that reflects the opinion of the markets. To achieve this consideration the Council will engage with its advisors to maintain a monitor on market pricing such as **"credit default swaps"** and overlay that information on top of the credit ratings.

3. **Other information sources** used will include the financial press, share price and other such information pertaining to the financial sector in order to establish the most robust scrutiny process on the suitability of potential investment counterparties.

4. This authority has defined the list of **types of investment instruments** that the treasury management team are authorised to use. There are two lists in appendix 5.4 under the categories of 'specified' and 'non-specified' investments.

    - **Specified investments** are those with a high level of credit quality and subject to a maturity limit of one year or have less than a year left to run to maturity if originally they were originally classified as being non-specified investments solely due to the maturity period exceeding one year.

- **Non-specified investments** are those with less high credit quality, may be for periods in excess of one year, and/or are more complex instruments which require greater consideration by members and officers before being authorised for use.

5. **Non-specified and loan investment limits.** The Council has determined that it will set a limit to the maximum exposure of the total treasury management investment portfolio to non-specified treasury management investments of 70%.

6. **Lending limits**, (amounts and maturity), for each counterparty will be set through applying the matrix table in paragraph 4.2.

7. **Transaction limits** are set for each type of investment in 4.2.

8. This authority will set a limit for its investments which are invested for **longer than 365 days**, (see paragraph 4.4).

9. Investments will only be placed with counterparties from countries with a specified minimum **sovereign rating**, (see paragraph 4.3).

10. This authority has engaged **external consultants**, (see paragraph 1.5), to provide expert advice on how to optimise an appropriate balance of security, liquidity and yield, given the risk appetite of this authority in the context of the expected level of cash balances and need for liquidity throughout the year.

11. All investments will be denominated in **sterling**.

12. As a result of the change in accounting standards for 2020/21 under IFRS 9, this authority will consider the implications of investment instruments which could result in an adverse movement in the value of the amount invested and resultant charges at the end of the year to the General Fund. (In November 2018, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [MHCLG], concluded a consultation for a temporary override to allow English local authorities time to adjust their portfolio of all pooled investments by announcing a statutory override to delay implementation of IFRS 9 for five years ending 31.3.23.

However, this authority will also pursue **value for money** in treasury management and will monitor the yield from investment income against appropriate benchmarks for investment performance, (see paragraph 4.5). Regular monitoring of investment performance will be carried out during the year.

Changes in risk management policy from last year.
The above criteria are remains unchanged from last year, apart from an increase to Non-specified investment limit, to allow for the holding of property funds, whilst other investments are low.

4.2 Creditworthiness policy

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

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

This modelling approach combines credit ratings, and any assigned Watches and Outlooks in a weighted scoring system which is then combined with an overlay of CDS spreads. The end product of this is a series of colour coded bands which indicate the relative creditworthiness of counterparties. These colour codes are used by the Council to determine the suggested duration for investments. The Council will, therefore, use counterparties within the following durational bands:

- Yellow 5 years *
- Dark pink 5 years for Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit score of 1.25
- Light pink 5 years for Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit score of 1.5
- Purple 2 years
- Blue 1 year (only applies to nationalised or semi nationalised UK Banks)
- Orange 1 year
- Red 6 months
- Green 100 days
- No colour not to be used

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

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

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

- if a downgrade results in the counterparty / investment scheme no longer meeting the Council's minimum criteria, its further use as a new investment will be withdrawn immediately.
- in addition to the use of credit ratings the Council will be advised of information in movements in Credit Default Swap spreads against the iTraxx European Financials benchmark and other market data on a daily basis via its Passport website, provided exclusively to it by Link. Extreme market movements may result in downgrade of an institution or removal from the Council's lending list.

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

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

	Colour (and long term rating where applicable)	Money Limit per banking group (at time of investment)	Transaction Limit	Time Limit
Banks *	yellow	£10m	£10m	5yrs
Banks	purple	£10m	£10m	2 yrs
Banks	orange	£10m	£10m	1 yr
Banks – part nationalised	blue	£20m	£20m	1 yr
Banks – part nationalised – Council's bank	blue	£50m	£30m	1 yr
Banks	red	£10m	£10m	6 mths
Banks	green	£10m	£10m	100 days
Banks	No colour	Not to be used	N/A	N/A
Limit 3 category – Council's banker (where "No Colour")	XXX	£50m	£30m	1 day
Property Funds	-	£20m	£10m	Not a fixed term investment so no time limit
DMADF	UK sovereign rating	unlimited	unlimited	6 months
Local authorities	n/a	£10m (per local authority)	£10m	unlimited
	Fund rating**	**Money Limit (at time of investment)**	**Transaction Limit**	**Time Limit**
Money Market Funds CNAV	AAA	£10m (per fund)	£10m	liquid
Money Market Funds LVNAV	AAA	£10m (per fund)	£10m	liquid
Money Market Funds VNAV	AAA	£10m (per fund)	£10m	liquid
Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit score of 1.25	Dark pink / AAA	£10m (per fund)	£10m	liquid
Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit score of 1.50	Light pink / AAA	£10m (per fund)	£10m	liquid

** Please note: the yellow colour category is for UK Government debt, or its equivalent, money market funds and collateralised deposits where the collateral is UK Government debt –see appendix 5.4.*

*** Please note: “fund” ratings are different to individual counterparty ratings, coming under either specific “MMF” or “Bond Fund” rating criteria.*

Creditworthiness.
Although the credit rating agencies changed their outlook on many UK banks from Stable to Negative during the quarter ended 30.6.20 due to upcoming risks to banks’ earnings and asset quality during the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, the majority of ratings were affirmed due to the continuing strong credit profiles of major financial institutions, including UK banks. However, during Q1 and Q2 2020, banks made provisions for *expected* credit losses and the rating changes reflected these provisions. As we move into future quarters, more information will emerge on *actual* levels of credit losses. (Quarterly earnings reports are normally announced in the second half of the month following the end of the quarter.) This has the potential to cause rating agencies to revisit their initial rating adjustments earlier in the current year. These adjustments could be negative or positive, although it should also be borne in mind that banks went into this pandemic with strong balance sheets. This is predominantly a result of regulatory changes imposed on banks following the Great Financial Crisis. Indeed, the Financial Policy Committee (FPC) report on 6th August revised down their expected credit losses for the UK banking sector to “somewhat less than £80bn”. It stated that in its assessment, “banks have buffers of capital more than sufficient to absorb the losses that are likely to arise under the MPC’s central projection”. The FPC stated that for real stress in the sector, the economic output would need to be twice as bad as the MPC’s projection, with unemployment rising to above 15%.

All three rating agencies have reviewed banks around the world with similar results in many countries of most banks being placed on Negative Outlook, but with a small number of actual downgrades.

CDS prices
Although bank CDS prices, (these are market indicators of credit risk), spiked upwards at the end of March / early April 2020 due to the heightened market uncertainty and ensuing liquidity crisis that affected financial markets, they have returned to more average levels since then. Nevertheless, prices are still elevated compared to end-February 2020. Pricing is likely to remain volatile as uncertainty continues. However, sentiment can easily shift, so it will remain important to undertake continual monitoring of all aspects of risk and return in the current circumstances. Link monitor CDS prices as part of their creditworthiness service to local authorities and the Council has access to this information via its Link-provided Passport portal.

4.3 Other limits

Due care will be taken to consider the exposure of the Council’s total investment portfolio to non-specified investments, countries, groups and sectors.

a) **Non-specified treasury management investment limit.** The Council has determined that it will limit the maximum total exposure of treasury management investments to non-specified treasury management investments as being 70% of the total treasury management investment portfolio.

b) **Country limit.** The Council has determined that it will only use approved counterparties from the UK and from countries with a **minimum sovereign credit rating of AA-** from Fitch *(or equivalent*). The list of countries that qualify using this credit criteria as at the date of this report are shown in

Appendix 5.6. This list will be added to, or deducted from, by officers should ratings change in accordance with this policy.

c) **Other limits.** In addition:

- limits in place above will apply to a group of companies;
- sector limits will be monitored regularly for appropriateness.

4.4 Investment strategy

In-house funds. Investments will be made with reference to the core balance and cash flow requirements and the outlook for short-term interest rates (i.e. rates for investments up to 12 months). Greater returns are usually obtainable by investing for longer periods. While most cash balances are required in order to manage the ups and downs of cash flow, where cash sums can be identified that could be invested for longer periods, the value to be obtained from longer term investments will be carefully assessed.

- If it is thought that Bank Rate is likely to rise significantly within the time horizon being considered, then consideration will be given to keeping most investments as being short term or variable.
- Conversely, if it is thought that Bank Rate is likely to fall within that time period, consideration will be given to locking in higher rates currently obtainable, for longer periods.

Investment returns expectations.
Bank Rate is unlikely to rise from 0.10% for a considerable period. It is very difficult to say when it may start rising so it may be best to assume that investment earnings from money market-related instruments will be sub 0.50% for the foreseeable future.

The suggested budgeted investment earnings rates for returns on investments placed for periods up to about three months during each financial year are as follows (the long term forecast is for periods over 10 years in the future):

Average earnings in each year	
2020/21	0.10%
2021/22	0.10%
2022/23	0.10%
2023/24	0.10%
2024/25	0.25%
Long term later years	2.00%

- The overall balance of risks to economic growth in the UK is probably now skewed to the upside, but is subject to major uncertainty due to the virus and how quickly successful vaccines may become available and widely administered to the population. It may also be affected by what, if any, deal the UK agrees as part of Brexit.
- There is relatively little UK domestic risk of increases or decreases in Bank Rate and significant changes in shorter term PWLB rates. The Bank of England has effectively ruled out the use of negative interest rates in the near term and increases in Bank Rate are likely to be some years away given the underlying economic expectations. However, it is always possible that safe haven flows, due to unexpected domestic developments and those in other major economies, or a

return of investor confidence in equities, could impact gilt yields, (and so PWLB rates), in the UK.

Negative investment rates
While the Bank of England said in August / September 2020 that it is unlikely to introduce a negative Bank Rate, at least in the next 6 -12 months, and in November omitted any mention of negative rates in the minutes of the meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee, some deposit accounts are already offering negative rates for shorter periods. As part of the response to the pandemic and lockdown, the Bank and the Government have provided financial markets and businesses with plentiful access to credit, either directly or through commercial banks. In addition, the Government has provided large sums of grants to local authorities to help deal with the COVID crisis; this has caused some local authorities to have sudden large increases in cash balances searching for an investment home, some of which was only very short term until those sums were able to be passed on.

As for money market funds (MMFs), yields have continued to drift lower. Some managers have already resorted to trimming fee levels to ensure that net yields for investors remain in positive territory where possible and practical. Investor cash flow uncertainty, and the need to maintain liquidity in these unprecedented times, has meant there is a surfeit of money swilling around at the very short end of the market. This has seen a number of market operators, now including the DMADF, offer nil or negative rates for very short term maturities. This is not universal, and MMFs are still offering a marginally positive return, as are a number of financial institutions for investments at the very short end of the yield curve.

Inter-local authority lending and borrowing rates have also declined due to the surge in the levels of cash seeking a short-term home at a time when many local authorities are probably having difficulties over accurately forecasting when disbursements of funds received will occur or when further large receipts will be received from the Government.

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

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

Upper limit for principal sums invested for longer than 365 days			
Current investments as at 30.11.20 in excess of 1 year maturing in each year	**2021/22**	**2022/23**	**2023/24**
£m	£m	£m	£m
20.0	40.0	40.0	40.0

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

4.5 Investment performance / risk benchmarking

This Council will use an investment benchmark to assess the investment performance of its investment portfolio of 7 day, 1, 3, 6 or 12 month LIBID compounded / uncompounded. The Council is appreciative that the provision of LIBOR and associated LIBID rates is expected to cease at the end of 2021. It will work with its advisors in determining suitable replacement investment benchmark(s) ahead of this cessation and will report back to members accordingly.

4.6 End of year investment report

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

5 APPENDICES

(These can be appended to the report or omitted as required)

1. Prudential and treasury indicators
2. Interest rate forecasts
3. Economic background
4. Treasury management practice 1 – credit and counterparty risk management (option 1)
5. Treasury management practice 1 – credit and counterparty risk management (option 2)
6. Approved countries for investments
7. Treasury management scheme of delegation
8. The treasury management role of the section 151 officer

5.1 THE CAPITAL PRUDENTIAL AND TREASURY INDICATORS 2021/22 – 2023/24

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

5.1.1 Capital expenditure

Capital expenditure	2019/20 Actual £m	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
Services	7.3	32.7	45.8	19.9	7.5
Commercial activities / non-financial investments	3.5	2.2	-	-	-
Total	**10.8**	**34.9**	**45.8**	**19.9**	**7.5**

5.1.2 Affordability prudential indicators

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

Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream

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

%	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate
Services	3.0%	3.0%	4.4%	8.2%	8.7%

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

5.1.3 Maturity structure of borrowing

Maturity structure of borrowing. These gross limits are set to reduce the Council's exposure to large fixed rate sums falling due for refinancing, and are required for upper and lower limits.

The Council is asked to approve the following treasury indicators and limits:

Maturity structure of fixed interest rate borrowing 2021/22		
	Lower	**Upper**
Under 12 months	0%	100%
12 months to 2 years	0%	100%
2 years to 5 years	0%	100%
5 years to 10 years	0%	100%
10 years to 20 years	0%	100%
20 years to 30 years	0%	100%
30 years to 40 years	0%	100%
40 years to 50 years	0%	100%
Maturity structure of variable interest rate borrowing 2021/22		
	Lower	Upper
Under 12 months	0%	100%
12 months to 2 years	0%	100%
2 years to 5 years	0%	100%
5 years to 10 years	0%	100%
10 years to 20 years	0%	75%
20 years to 30 years	0%	50%
30 years to 40 years	0%	25%
40 years to 50 years	0%	25%

5.1.4. Control of interest rate exposure

Please see paragraphs 3.3, 3.4 and 4.4.

5.2 INTEREST RATE FORECASTS 2020-2024

The PWLB rates below are based on the new margins over gilts announced on 26th November 2020. PWLB forecasts shown below have taken into account the 20 basis point certainty rate reduction effective as of the 1st November 2012.

Link Group Interest Rate View 9.11.20 (The Capital Economics forecasts were done 11.11.20)

These Link forecasts have been amended for the reduction in PWLB margins by 1.0% from 26.11.20

	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24
BANK RATE	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
3 month ave earnings	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
6 month ave earnings	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
12 month ave earnings	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20
5 yr PWLB	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
10 yr PWLB	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30
25 yr PWLB	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80
50 yr PWLB	1.30	1.30	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
Bank Rate														
Link	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
Capital Economics	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	-	-	-	-	-
5yr PWLB Rate														
Link	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Capital Economics	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	-	-	-	-	-
10yr PWLB Rate														
Link	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30
Capital Economics	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	-	-	-	-	-
25yr PWLB Rate														
Link	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80
Capital Economics	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	-	-	-	-	-
50yr PWLB Rate														
Link	1.30	1.30	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
Capital Economics	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70	-	-	-	-	-

5.3 ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

- **UK.** The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee kept **Bank Rate** unchanged on 5th November. However, it revised its economic forecasts to take account of a second national lockdown from 5th November to 2nd December which is obviously going to put back economic recovery and do further damage to the economy. It therefore decided to do a further tranche of **quantitative easing (QE) of £150bn**, to start in January when the current programme of £300bn of QE announced in March to June, runs out. It did this so that "announcing further asset purchases now should support the economy and help to ensure the unavoidable near-term slowdown in activity was not amplified by a tightening in monetary conditions that could slow the return of inflation to the target".
- Its forecasts appeared, at the time, to be rather optimistic in terms of three areas:
  - The economy would recover to reach its pre-pandemic level in Q1 2022
  - The Bank also expects there to be excess demand in the economy by Q4 2022.
  - CPI inflation is therefore projected to be a bit above its 2% target by the start of 2023 and the "inflation risks were judged to be balanced".
- Significantly, there was no mention of **negative interest rates** in the minutes or Monetary Policy Report, suggesting that the MPC remains some way from being persuaded of the case for such a policy, at least for the next 6 -12 months. However, rather than saying that it "stands ready to adjust monetary policy", the MPC this time said that it will take "whatever additional action was necessary to achieve its remit". The latter seems stronger and wider and may indicate the Bank's willingness to embrace new tools.
- One key addition to **the Bank's forward guidance** in August was a new phrase in the policy statement, namely that "it does not intend to tighten monetary policy until there is clear evidence that significant progress is being made in eliminating spare capacity and achieving the 2% target sustainably". That seems designed to say, in effect, that even if inflation rises to 2% in a couple of years' time, do not expect any action from the MPC to raise Bank Rate – until they can clearly see that level of inflation is going to be persistently above target if it takes no action to raise Bank Rate. Our Bank Rate forecast currently shows no increase through to quarter 1 2024 but there could well be no increase during the next five years due to the slow rate of recovery of the economy and the need for the Government to see the burden of the elevated debt to GDP ratio falling significantly. **Inflation** is unlikely to pose a threat requiring increases in Bank Rate during this period as there is likely to be spare capacity in the economy for a considerable time. It is expected to briefly peak at around 2% towards the end of 2021, but this is a temporary short lived factor and so not a concern.
- However, the minutes did contain several references to **downside risks**. The MPC reiterated that the "recovery would take time, and the risks around the GDP projection were judged to be skewed to the downside". It also said "the risk of a more persistent period of elevated unemployment remained material". Downside risks could well include severe restrictions remaining in place in some form during the rest of December and most of January too. That could involve some or all of the lockdown being extended beyond 2nd December, a temporary relaxation of restrictions over Christmas, a resumption of the lockdown in January and lots of regions being subject to Tier 3 restrictions when the lockdown ends. Hopefully, restrictions should progressively ease during the spring. It is only to be expected that some businesses that have barely survived the first lockdown, will fail to

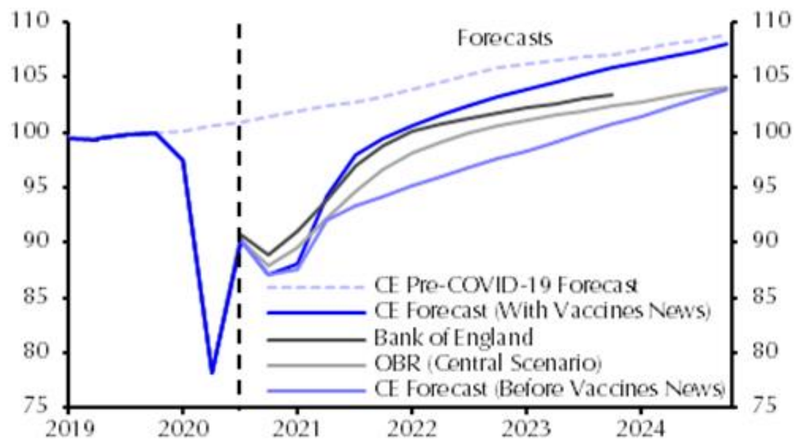
survive the second lockdown, especially those businesses that depend on a surge of business in the run up to Christmas each year. This will mean that there will be some level of further permanent loss of economic activity, although the extension of the furlough scheme to the end of 31st March will limit the degree of damage done.

- As for **upside risks**, we have been waiting expectantly for news that various **COVID19 vaccines** would be cleared as being safe and effective for administering to the general public. The Pfizer announcement on 9th November was very encouraging as its 90% effectiveness was much higher than the 50-60% rate of effectiveness of flu vaccines which might otherwise have been expected. However, their phase three trials are still only two-thirds complete. More data needs to be collected to make sure there are no serious side effects. We don't know exactly how long immunity will last or whether it is effective across all age groups. The Pfizer vaccine specifically also has demanding cold storage requirements of minus 70C that might make it more difficult to roll out. However, the logistics of production and deployment can surely be worked out over the next few months.
- However, there has been even further encouraging news since then with another two vaccines announcing high success rates. Together, these three announcements have enormously boosted confidence that **life could largely return to normal during the second half of 2021**, with activity in the still-depressed sectors like restaurants, travel and hotels returning to their pre-pandemic levels, which would help to bring the unemployment rate down. With the household saving rate currently being exceptionally high, there is plenty of pent-up demand and purchasing power stored up for these services. A comprehensive roll-out of vaccines might take into late 2021 to fully complete; but if these vaccines prove to be highly effective, then there is a possibility that restrictions could begin to be eased, possibly in Q2 2021, once vulnerable people and front-line workers had been vaccinated. At that point, there would be less reason to fear that hospitals could become overwhelmed any more. Effective vaccines would radically improve the economic outlook once they have been widely administered; it may allow GDP to rise to its pre-virus level a year earlier than otherwise and mean that the unemployment rate peaks at 7% next year instead of 9%. But while this would reduce the need for more QE and/or negative interest rates, increases in Bank Rate would still remain some years away. There is also a potential question as to whether the relatively optimistic outlook of the Monetary Policy Report was swayed by making positive assumptions around effective vaccines being available soon. It should also be borne in mind that as effective vaccines will take time to administer, economic news could well get worse before it starts getting better.

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

- Overall, **the pace of recovery** was not expected to be in the form of a rapid V shape, but a more elongated and prolonged one. The initial recovery was sharp but after a disappointing increase in GDP of only 2.1% in August, this left the economy still 9.2% smaller than in February; this suggested that the economic recovery was running out of steam after recovering 64% of its total fall during the crisis. The last three months of 2020 were originally expected to show zero growth due to the impact of widespread local lockdowns, consumers probably remaining cautious in spending, and uncertainty over the outcome of the UK/EU trade negotiations concluding at the end of the year also being a headwind. However, the second national lockdown starting on 5th November for one month is expected to depress GDP by 8% in November while the rebound in December is likely to be muted and vulnerable to the previously mentioned downside risks. It was expected that the second national lockdown would push back recovery of GDP to pre pandemic levels by six months and into sometime during 2023. However, the graph below shows what Capital Economics forecast will happen now that there is high confidence that successful vaccines will be widely administered in the UK in the first half of 2021; this would cause a much quicker recovery than in their previous forecasts.

Chart: Level of real GDP (Q4 2019 = 100)



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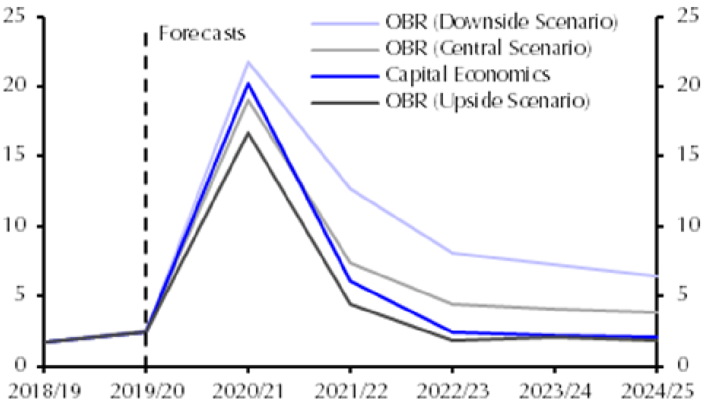
This recovery of growth which eliminates the effects of the pandemic by about the middle of the decade would have major repercussions for public finances as it would be consistent with the government deficit falling to 2% of GDP without any tax increases. This would be in line with the OBR's most optimistic forecast in the graph below, rather than their current central scenario which predicts a 4% deficit due to assuming much slower growth. However, Capital Economics forecasts assume that there is a reasonable Brexit deal and also that politicians do not raise taxes or embark on major austerity measures and so, (perversely!), depress economic growth and recovery.

Chart: Public Sector Net Borrowing (As a % of GDP)



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- Capital Economics have not revised their forecasts for Bank Rate or gilt yields after this major revision of their forecasts for the speed of recovery of economic growth, as they are also forecasting that inflation is unlikely to be a significant threat and so gilt yields are unlikely to rise significantly from current levels.

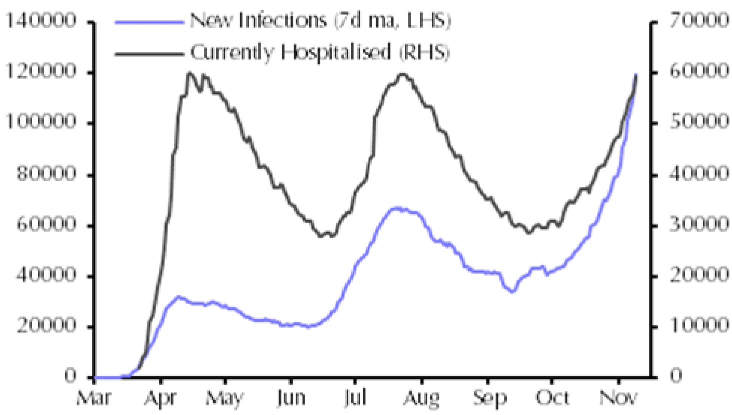
- There will still be some **painful longer term adjustments** as e.g. office space and travel by planes, trains and buses may not recover to their previous level of use for several years, or possibly ever, even if vaccines are fully successful in overcoming the current virus. There is also likely to be a reversal of globalisation as this crisis has exposed how vulnerable long-distance supply chains are. On the other hand, digital services are one area that has already seen huge growth.

- The **Financial Policy Committee** (FPC) report on 6th August revised down their expected credit losses for the banking sector to "somewhat less than £80bn". It stated that in its assessment "banks have buffers of capital more than sufficient to absorb the losses that are likely to arise under the MPC's central projection". The FPC stated that for real stress in the sector, the economic output would need to be twice as bad as the MPC's projection, with unemployment rising to above 15%.

US. The result of **the November elections** means that while the Democrats have gained the presidency and a majority in the House of Representatives, it looks as if the Republicans will retain their slim majority in the Senate. This means that the Democrats will not be able to do a massive fiscal stimulus, as they had been hoping to do after the elections, as they will have to get agreement from the Republicans. That would have resulted in another surge of debt issuance and could have put particular upward pressure on debt yields – which could then have also put upward pressure on gilt yields. On the other hand, equity prices leapt up on 9th November on the first news of a successful vaccine and have risen further during November as more vaccines announced successful results. This could cause a big shift in investor sentiment i.e. a swing to sell out of government debt to buy into equities which would normally be expected to cause debt prices to fall and yields to rise. However, the rise in yields has been quite muted so far and it is too early to say whether the Fed would feel it necessary to take action to suppress any further rise in debt yields. It is likely that the next two years, and possibly four years in the US, could be a political stalemate where neither party can do anything radical.

The economy had been recovering quite strongly from its contraction in 2020 of 10.2% due to the **pandemic** with GDP only 3.5% below its pre-pandemic level and the unemployment rate dropping below 7%. However, the rise in new cases during quarter 4, to the highest level since mid-August, suggests that the US could be in the early stages of a third wave. While the first wave in March and April was concentrated in the Northeast, and the second wave in the South and West, the latest wave has been driven by a growing outbreak in the Midwest. The latest upturn poses a threat that the recovery in the economy could stall. This is **the single biggest downside risk** to the shorter term outlook – a more widespread and severe wave of infections over the winter months, which is compounded by the impact of the regular flu season and, as a consequence, threatens to overwhelm health care facilities. Under those circumstances, states might feel it necessary to return to more draconian lockdowns.

COVID-19 New infections & hospitalisations



However, with the likelihood that highly effective vaccines are going to become progressively widely administered during 2021, this should mean that life will start to return to normal during quarter 2 of 2021. Consequently, there should be a sharp pick-up in growth during that quarter and a rapid return to the pre-pandemic level of growth by the end of the year.

After Chair Jerome Powell unveiled the **Fed's adoption of a flexible average inflation target** in his Jackson Hole speech in late August, the mid-September meeting of the Fed agreed by a majority to a toned down version of the new inflation target in his speech - that *"it would likely be appropriate to maintain the current target range until labour market conditions were judged to be consistent with the Committee's assessments of maximum employment and inflation had risen to 2% and was on track to moderately exceed 2% for some time."* This change was aimed to provide more stimulus for economic growth and higher levels of employment and to avoid the danger of getting caught in a deflationary "trap" like Japan. It is to be noted that inflation has actually been under-shooting the 2% target significantly for most of the last decade, (and this year), so financial markets took note that higher levels of inflation are likely to be in the pipeline; long-term bond yields duly rose after the meeting. The Fed also called on Congress to end its political disagreement over providing more support for the unemployed as there is a limit to what monetary policy can do compared to more directed central government fiscal policy. The FOMC's updated economic and rate projections in mid-September showed that officials expect to leave the fed funds rate at near-zero until at least end-2023 and probably for another year or two beyond that. There is now some expectation that where the Fed has led in changing its inflation target, other major central banks will follow. The increase in tension over the last year between the US and China is likely to lead to a lack of momentum in progressing the initial positive moves to agree a phase one trade deal. The Fed's meeting on 5 November was unremarkable - but at a politically sensitive time around the elections.

EU. The economy was recovering well towards the end of Q2 and into Q3 after a sharp drop in GDP caused by the virus, (e.g. France 18.9%, Italy 17.6%). However, growth is likely to stagnate during Q4, and Q1 of 2021, as a second wave of the virus has affected many countries, and is likely to hit hardest those countries more dependent on tourism. The €750bn fiscal support package eventually agreed by the EU after prolonged disagreement between various countries, is unlikely to provide significant support, and quickly enough, to make an appreciable difference in the worst affected countries. With inflation expected to be unlikely to get much above 1% over the next two years, the ECB has been struggling to get inflation up to its 2% target. It is currently unlikely that it will cut its central rate even further into negative territory from -0.5%, although the ECB has stated that it retains this as a possible tool to use. It is therefore expected that it will have to provide more monetary policy support through more quantitative easing purchases of bonds in the absence of sufficient fiscal support from governments. The current PEPP scheme of €1,350bn of QE which started in March 2020 is providing protection to the sovereign bond yields of weaker countries like Italy. There is therefore unlikely to be a euro crisis while the ECB is able to maintain this level of support. However, the PEPP scheme is regarded as being a temporary measure during this crisis so it may need to be increased once the first PEPP runs out during early 2021. It could also decide to focus on using the Asset Purchase Programme to make more monthly purchases, rather than the PEPP scheme, and it does have other monetary policy options.

However, as in the UK and the US, the advent of highly effective vaccines will be a game changer, although growth will struggle during the closing and opening quarters of this year and next year respectively before it finally breaks through into strong growth in quarters 2 and 3. The ECB will now have to review whether more monetary support will be required to help recovery in the shorter term or to help individual countries more badly impacted by the pandemic.

China. After a concerted effort to get on top of the virus outbreak in Q1, economic recovery was strong in Q2 and then into Q3 and Q4; this has enabled China to recover all of the contraction in Q1. Policy makers have both quashed the virus and implemented a programme of monetary and fiscal support that has been particularly effective at stimulating short-term growth. At the same time, China's economy has benefited from the shift towards online spending by consumers in developed markets. These factors help to explain its comparative outperformance compared to western economies.

However, this was achieved by major central government funding of yet more infrastructure spending. After years of growth having been focused on this same area, any further spending in this area is likely to lead to increasingly weaker economic returns in the longer term. This could, therefore, lead to a further misallocation of resources which will weigh on growth in future years.

Japan. Japan's success in containing the virus without imposing draconian restrictions on activity should enable a faster return to pre-virus levels of output than in many major economies. While the second wave of the virus has been abating, the economy has been continuing to recover at a reasonable pace from its earlier total contraction of 8.5% in GDP. However, there now appears to be the early stages of the start of a third wave. It has also been struggling to get out of a deflation trap for many years and to stimulate consistent significant GDP growth and to get inflation up to its target of 2%, despite huge monetary and fiscal stimulus. There has also been little progress on fundamental reform of the economy. The change of Prime Minister is not expected to result in any significant change in economic policy.

World growth. While Latin America and India have, until recently, been hotspots for virus infections, infection rates have begun to stabilise. World growth will be in recession this year. Inflation is unlikely to be a problem for some years due to the creation of excess production capacity and depressed demand caused by the coronavirus crisis.

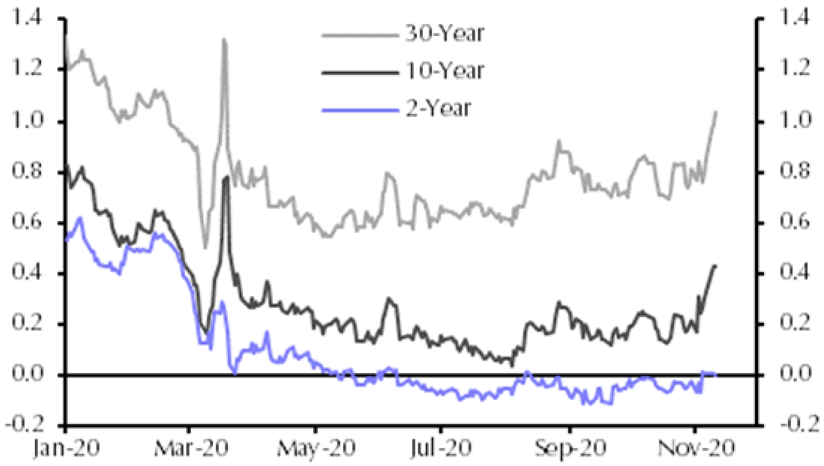
Until recent years, world growth has been boosted by increasing **globalisation** i.e. countries specialising in producing goods and commodities in which they have an economic advantage and which they then trade with the rest of the world. This has boosted worldwide productivity and growth, and, by lowering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

Summary

Central banks are, therefore, likely to support growth by maintaining loose monetary policy through keeping rates very low for longer. Governments could also help a quicker recovery by providing more fiscal support for their economies at a time when total debt is affordable due to the very low rates of interest. They will also need to avoid significant increases in taxation or austerity measures that depress demand in their economies.

If there is a huge surge in investor confidence as a result of successful vaccines which leads to a major switch out of government bonds into equities, which, in turn, causes government debt yields to rise, then there will be pressure on central banks to actively manage debt yields by further QE purchases of government debt; this would help to suppress the rise in debt yields and so keep the total interest bill on greatly expanded government debt portfolios within manageable parameters. It is also the main alternative to a programme of austerity.

The graph below as at 10th November, shows how the 10 and 30 year gilt yields in the UK spiked up after the Pfizer vaccine announcement on the previous day, (though they have levelled off during late November at around the same elevated levels): -



INTEREST RATE FORECASTS

Brexit. The interest rate forecasts provided by Link in paragraph 3.3 are predicated on an assumption of a reasonable agreement being reached on trade negotiations between the UK and the EU by 31.12.20. However, as the differences between a Brexit deal and a no deal are not as big as they once were, the economic costs of a no deal have diminished. The bigger risk is that relations between the UK and the EU deteriorate to such an extent that both sides start to unravel the agreements already put in place. So what really matters now is not whether there is a deal or a no deal, but what type of no deal it could be.

The differences between a deal and a no deal were much greater immediately after the EU Referendum in June 2016, and also just before the original Brexit deadline of 29.3.19. That's partly because leaving the EU's Single Market and Customs Union makes this Brexit a relatively "hard" one. But it's mostly because a lot of arrangements have already been put in place. Indeed, since the Withdrawal Agreement laid down the terms of the break-up, both the UK and the EU have made substantial progress in granting financial services equivalence and the UK has replicated the bulk of the trade deals it had with non-EU countries via the EU. In a no deal in these circumstances (a "cooperative no deal"), GDP in 2021 as a whole may be only 1.0% lower than if there were a deal. In this situation, financial services equivalence would probably be granted during 2021 and, if necessary, the UK and the EU would probably rollover any temporary arrangements in the future.

The real risk is if the UK and the EU completely fall out. The UK could override part or all of the Withdrawal Agreement while the EU could respond by starting legal proceedings and few measures could be implemented to mitigate the disruption on 1.1.21. In such an "uncooperative no deal", GDP could be 2.5% lower in 2021 as a whole than if there was a deal. The acrimony would probably continue beyond 2021 too, which may lead to fewer agreements in the future and the expiry of any temporary measures.

Relative to the slump in GDP endured during the COVID crisis, any hit from a no deal would be small. But the pandemic does mean there is less scope for policy to respond. Even so, the Chancellor could loosen fiscal policy by about £10bn (0.5% of GDP) and target it at those sectors hit hardest. The Bank of England could also prop up demand, most likely through more gilt and corporate bond purchases rather than negative interest rates.

Brexit may reduce the economy's potential growth rate in the long run. However, much of that drag is now likely to be offset by an acceleration of productivity growth triggered by the digital revolution brought about by the COVID crisis.

So in summary there is not likely to be any change in Bank Rate in 20/21 – 21/22 due to whatever outcome there is from the trade negotiations and while there will probably be some movement in gilt yields / PWLB rates after the deadline date, there will probably be minimal enduring impact beyond the initial reaction.

The balance of risks to the UK

- The overall balance of risks to economic growth in the UK is probably now skewed to the upside, but is subject to major uncertainty due to the virus and how quickly successful vaccines may become available and widely administered to the population. It may also be affected by what, if any, deal the UK agrees as part of Brexit.
- There is relatively little UK domestic risk of increases or decreases in Bank Rate and significant changes in shorter term PWLB rates. The Bank of England has effectively ruled out the use of negative interest rates in the near term and increases in Bank Rate are likely to be some years away given the underlying economic expectations. However, it is always possible that safe haven flows, due to unexpected domestic developments and those in other major economies, could impact gilt yields, (and so PWLB rates), in the UK.

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

- **UK** - further national lockdowns or severe regional restrictions in major conurbations during 2021.
- **UK / EU trade negotiations** – if they were to cause significant economic disruption and downturn in the rate of growth.
- **UK government** takes too much action too quickly to raise taxation or introduce austerity measures that depress demand in the economy.
- **UK - Bank of England** takes action too quickly, or too far, over the next three years to raise Bank Rate and causes UK economic growth, and increases in inflation, to be weaker than we currently anticipate.
- A resurgence of the **Eurozone sovereign debt crisis.** The ECB has taken monetary policy action to support the bonds of EU states, with the positive impact most likely for "weaker" countries. In addition, the EU agreed a €750bn fiscal support package. These actions will help shield weaker economic regions for the next year or so. However, in the case of Italy, the cost of the virus crisis has added to its already huge debt mountain and its slow economic growth will leave it vulnerable to markets returning to taking the view that its level of debt is unsupportable. There remains a sharp divide between northern EU countries favouring low debt to GDP and annual balanced budgets and southern countries who want to see jointly issued Eurobonds to finance economic recovery. This divide could undermine the unity of the EU in time to come.
- Weak capitalisation of some **European banks**, which could be undermined further depending on extent of credit losses resultant of the pandemic.
- **German minority government & general election in 2021.** In the German general election of September 2017, Angela Merkel's CDU party was left in a vulnerable minority position dependent on the fractious support of the SPD party, as a result of the rise in popularity of the anti-immigration AfD party. The CDU has

done badly in subsequent state elections but the SPD has done particularly badly. Angela Merkel has stepped down from being the CDU party leader but she intends to remain as Chancellor until the general election in 2021. This then leaves a major question mark over who will be the major guiding hand and driver of EU unity when she steps down.

- **Other minority EU governments.** Austria, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, Ireland and Belgium also have vulnerable minority governments dependent on coalitions which could prove fragile.
- **Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary** now form a strongly anti-immigration bloc within the EU. In November, Hungary and Poland threatened to veto the 7 year EU budget due to the inclusion of a rule of law requirement that poses major challenges to both countries. There has also been a rise in anti-immigration sentiment in Germany and France.
- **Geopolitical risks,** for example in China, Iran or North Korea, but also in Europe and other Middle Eastern countries, which could lead to increasing safe haven flows.

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

- **UK -** a significant rise in inflationary pressures. These could be caused by an uncooperative Brexit deal or by a stronger than currently expected recovery in the UK economy after effective vaccines are administered quickly to the UK population which leads to a resumption of normal life and a return to full economic activity across all sectors of the economy.
- The **Bank of England is too slow** in its pace and strength of increases in Bank Rate and, therefore, allows inflationary pressures to build up too strongly within the UK economy, which then necessitates a rapid series of increases in Bank Rate to stifle inflation.
- **Post-Brexit** – if a positive agreement was reached that removed the majority of threats of economic disruption between the EU and the UK.

5.4 TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRACTICE (TMP1) – CREDIT AND COUNTERPARTY RISK MANAGEMENT OPTION 1

SPECIFIED INVESTMENTS: All such investments will be sterling denominated, with **maturities up to a maximum of 1 year**, meeting the minimum 'high' quality criteria where applicable. (Non-specified investments which would be specified investments apart from originally being for a period longer than 12 months, will be classified as being specified once the remaining period to maturity falls to under twelve months.)

NON-SPECIFIED INVESTMENTS: These are any investments which do not meet the specified investment criteria. A maximum of 70% ** will be held in aggregate in non-specified investment.

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

The criteria, time limits and monetary limits applying to institutions or investment vehicles are:

	Minimum credit criteria / colour band	**** Max % of total investments / £ limit per institution**	**Max. maturity period**
DMADF – UK Government	N/A	100%	6 months (max. is set by the DMO*)
UK Government gilts	yellow	100%	5 years
UK Government Treasury bills	yellow	100%	364 days (max. is set by the DMO*)
Bonds issued by multilateral development banks	yellow	40%	5 years
Money Market Funds CNAV	AAA	95%	Liquid
Money Market Funds LNVAV	AAA	95%	Liquid
Money Market Funds VNAV	AAA	95%	Liquid
Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit score of 1.25	AAA	95%	Liquid
Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit score of 1.5	AAA	100%	Liquid

Local authorities	yellow	100%	5 years
Term deposits with banks and building societies	Green	100%	24 months
CDs or corporate bonds with banks and building societies	Green	100%	24 months
Gilt funds	UK sovereign rating	100%	12 Months

* DMO – is the Debt Management Office of H.M.Treasury

SPECIFIED INVESTMENTS:
(All such investments will be sterling denominated, with **maturities up to a maximum of 1 year**, meeting the minimum 'high' rating criteria where applicable)

	* Minimum 'High' Credit Criteria	Use
Debt Management Agency Deposit Facility	--	In-house
Term deposits – local authorities	--	In-house
Term deposits – banks and building societies	Green	In-house
Term deposits – banks and building societies	Green	Fund Managers

Term deposits with nationalised banks and banks and building societies

	* Minimum Credit Criteria	Use	*** Max % of total investments	Max. maturity period
UK part nationalised banks	Green	In-house and Fund Managers	100%	12 Months
Banks part nationalised by high credit rated (sovereign rating) countries – non UK	Green	In-house and Fund Managers	100%	12 Months
Collateralised deposit (see note 2)	UK sovereign rating or note 1	In-house and Fund Managers		
UK Government Gilts	UK sovereign rating	In-house buy and hold and Fund Managers		

Bonds issued by multilateral development banks	AAA (or state your criteria if different)	In-house buy and hold and Fund Managers
Bonds issued by a financial institution which is explicitly guaranteed by the UK Government e.g. National Rail	UK sovereign rating	In-house buy and hold and Fund Managers
Sovereign bond issues (other than the UK govt)	AAA (or state your criteria if different)	In-house buy and hold and Fund Managers
Treasury Bills	UK sovereign rating	In house and Fund Managers

Collective Investment Schemes structured as Open Ended Investment Companies (OEICs): -		
1a. Money Market Funds (CNAV)	* MMF rating	In-house and Fund Managers
1b. Money Market Funds (LVNAV)	* MMF rating	In-house and Fund Managers
1c. Money Market Funds (VNAV)	* MMF rating	In-house and Fund Managers
2a. Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit score of 1.25	* Bond fund rating	In-house and Fund Managers
2b. Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit score of 1.5	*Bond fund rating	In-house and Fund Managers
3. Bond Funds	* Bond fund rating (or alternate measure if not rated)	In-house and Fund Managers
4. Gilt Funds	UK sovereign rating	In-house and Fund Managers

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

NON-SPECIFIED INVESTMENTS: A maximum of 70% will be held in aggregate in non-specified investment

1. Maturities of ANY period

	* Minimum Credit Criteria	Use	** Max % of total investments	Max. maturity period
Fixed term deposits with variable rate and variable maturities: -Structured deposits	Green	In-house	100%	As per Credit Criteria
Certificates of deposit issued by banks and building societies	Green	In-house	100%	As per Credit Criteria
Commercial paper other	AAA	In-house and Fund Managers	10%	2 Years
Corporate bonds	AAA	In-house and Fund Managers	50%	5 Years
Floating rate notes	AAA	In house and Fund Managers	50%	5Years
Collective Investment Schemes structured as Open Ended Investment Companies (OEICs)				
Corporate bond fund	AAA	In house and Fund Managers	10%	5 Years
Property Funds	Based on external credit assessment from the Council's Treasury Management Advisors, UK asset investment.	In house and Fund Managers	£20m at fund entry, Maximum of two funds at any one time for viability	Long Term

2. Maturities in excess of 1 year

	* Minimum Credit Criteria	Use	** Max % of total investments	Max. maturity period
Term deposits – local authorities	--	In-house	80%	5 years
Term deposits – banks and building societies	Orange	In-house	80%	5 years
Certificates of deposit issued by banks and building societies	Orange	In-house	80%	5 years
Certificates of deposit issued by banks and building societies	Orange	Fund Managers	80%	5 years
UK Government Gilts	UK sovereign rating	In-house and Fund Managers	80%	10 years
Bonds issued by multilateral development banks	AAA (or state your criteria if different)	In-house and Fund Managers	10%	5 years
Sovereign bond issues (other than the UK govt)	AAA (or state your criteria if different)	In-house and Fund Managers	50%	10 years
Corporate bonds	*Short-term __, Long-term __,	In-house and Fund Managers	10%	5 years
Collective Investment Schemes structured as Open Ended Investment Companies (OEICs)				
Property Funds	Based on external credit assessment from the Council's Treasury Management Advisors, UK asset investment.	In house and Fund Managers	£20m at fund entry, Maximum of two funds at any one time for viability	Long Term

5.5 APPROVED COUNTRIES FOR INVESTMENTS

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

Based on lowest available rating

AAA

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

AA+

- Canada
- Finland
- U.S.A.

AA

- Abu Dhabi (UAE)
- France

AA-

- Belgium
- Hong Kong
- Qatar
- **U.K.**

THIS LIST IS AS AT 1.12.20

5.6 TREASURY MANAGEMENT SCHEME OF DELEGATION

(i) Full council

- receiving and reviewing reports on treasury management policies, practices and activities;
- approval of annual strategy.

(ii) Executive / Full Council

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

(iii) Audit and Governance Committee

- reviewing the treasury management policy and procedures and making recommendations to the responsible body.

5.8 THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT ROLE OF THE SECTION 151 OFFICER

The S151 officer

- recommending clauses, treasury management policy/practices for approval, reviewing the same regularly, and monitoring compliance;
- submitting regular treasury management policy reports;
- submitting budgets and budget variations;
- receiving and reviewing management information reports;
- reviewing the performance of the treasury management function;
- ensuring the adequacy of treasury management resources and skills, and the effective division of responsibilities within the treasury management function;
- ensuring the adequacy of internal audit, and liaising with external audit;
- recommending the appointment of external service providers.
- preparation of a capital strategy to include capital expenditure, capital financing, non-financial investments and treasury management, with a long term timeframe
- ensuring that the capital strategy is prudent, sustainable, affordable and prudent in the long term and provides value for money
- ensuring that due diligence has been carried out on all treasury and non-financial investments and is in accordance with the risk appetite of the authority
- ensure that the authority has appropriate legal powers to undertake expenditure on non-financial assets and their financing
- ensuring the proportionality of all investments so that the authority does not undertake a level of investing which exposes the authority to an excessive level of risk compared to its financial resources
- ensuring that an adequate governance process is in place for the approval, monitoring and ongoing risk management of all non-financial investments and long term liabilities
- provision to members of a schedule of all non-treasury investments including material investments in subsidiaries, joint ventures, loans and financial guarantees
- ensuring that members are adequately informed and understand the risk exposures taken on by an authority
- ensuring that the authority has adequate expertise, either in house or externally provided, to carry out the above
- creation of Treasury Management Practices which specifically deal with how non treasury investments will be carried out and managed, to include the following: -
    - *Risk management (TMP1 and schedules), including investment and risk management criteria for any material non-treasury investment portfolios;*
    - *Performance measurement and management (TMP2 and schedules), including methodology and criteria for assessing the performance and success of non-treasury investments;*
    - *Decision making, governance and organisation (TMP5 and schedules), including a statement of the governance requirements for decision making in relation to non-treasury investments; and arrangements to ensure that appropriate professional due diligence is carried out to support decision making;*

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

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

Appendix B - Prudential Indicators 2021/22 for Approval

1. Capital Expenditure

	Actual £m	Estimate £m	Estimate £m	Estimate £m	Estimate £m
Services	7.3	32.7	45.8	19.9	7.5
Commercial activities / non-financial investments	3.5	2.2	-	-	-
Total	**10.8**	**34.9**	**45.8**	**19.9**	**7.5**

Financing of capital expenditure	**2019/20 Actual £m**	**2020/21 Estimate £m**	**2021/22 Estimate £m**	**2022/23 Estimate £m**	**2023/24 Estimate £m**
Capital receipts	8.0	-	7.2	1.0	7.1
Capital grants	2.8	7.9	3.4	0.1	-
Revenue	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Net financing need for the year	**4.5**	**26.7**	**35.0**	**18.6**	**0.2**

Commercial activities / non-financial investments	**2019/20 Actual £m**	**2020/21 Estimate £m**	**2021/22 Estimate £m**	**2022/23 Estimate £m**	**2023/24 Estimate £m**
Capital Expenditure	4.8	2.2	-	-	-
Financing costs	-	-	-	-	-
Net financing need for the year	**4.8**	**2.2**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Percentage of total net financing need %	107%	8%	-	-	-

2. Capital Financing Requirement

	2019/20 Actual £m	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
Capital Financing Requirement					
CFR – non housing	(24.794)	(0.248)	34.715	53.245	53.400
CFR - Commercial activities/ non-financial investments	5.317	7.502	7.502	7.502	7.502
Total CFR	(19.477)	7.254	42.217	60.747	60.902
Movement in CFR	4.530	26.731	34.963	18.530	0.155

Movement in CFR represented by					
Net financing need for the year (above)	15,330	34,864	45.768	19.888	7.463
Less MRP/VRP and other financing movements	(10.800)	(8.111)	(10.805)	(1.358)	(7.308)
Movement in CFR	**4.530**	**26.731**	**34.963**	**18.530**	**0.155**

3. Core Funds and expected investment balances

Year End Resources	2019/20 Actual £m	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
Fund balances / reserves	16.485	15.411	17.921	16.348	14.761
Capital receipts	-	-	-	-	-
Provisions	2.115	5.500	4.800	3.800	2.800
Other	0.300	-	-	-	-
Total core funds	18.900	20.911	22.721	20.148	17.561
Working capital*	38.000	15.000	3.000	3.000	6.000
Under/over borrowing	1.000	-	-	-	-
Expected investments	**57.900**	**35.911**	**25.721**	**23.148**	**23.561**

4. Actual External Borrowing

	2019/20 Actual £m	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
External Debt					
Debt at 1 April	7.5	7.5	34.2	26.0	44.5
Expected change in Debt	-	26.7	(8.2)	18.5	0.2
Other long-term liabilities (OLTL)	-	-	-	-	-
Expected change in OLTL	-	-	-	-	-
Actual gross debt at 31 March	**7.5**	**34.2**	**26.0**	**44.5**	**44.7**
The Capital Financing Requirement	**(19.5)**	**7.3**	**42.2**	**60.7**	**60.9**
Under / (over) borrowing	**(7.5)**	**(26.9)**	**16.2**	**16.2**	**16.2**

5. Operational Boundary

Operational boundary	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
Debt	20.0	40.0	100.0	100.0
Other long term liabilities	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
Commercial activities/ non-financial investments	10.0	20.0	30.0	30.0
Total	40.0	60.0	140.0	140.0

6. Authorised Limit

Authorised Limit	2020/21 Estimate £m	2021/22 Estimate £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m
Debt	100.0	150.0	150.0	150.0
Other long term liabilities	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
Commercial activities/ non-financial investments	10.0	30.0	30.0	30.0
Total	120.0	190.0	190.0	190.0

7. Upper limit for principal sums invested for longer than 365 days

Current investments as at 30.11.20 in excess of 1 year maturing in each year	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
£m	**£m**	**£m**	**£m**
20.0	40.0	40.0	40.0

8. Creditworthiness policy and counter-party limits

	Colour (and long term rating where applicable)	Money Limit per banking group (at time of investment)	Transaction Limit	Time Limit
Banks *	yellow	£10m	£10m	5yrs
Banks	purple	£10m	£10m	2 yrs
Banks	orange	£10m	£10m	1 yr
Banks – part nationalised	blue	£20m	£20m	1 yr
Banks – part nationalised – Council's bank	blue	£50m	£30m	1 yr
Banks	red	£10m	£10m	6 mths
Banks	green	£10m	£10m	100 days
Banks	No colour	Not to be used	N/A	N/A
Limit 3 category – Council's banker (where "No Colour")	XXX	£30m	£30m	1 day
Property Funds	-	£20m	£10m	Not a fixed term investment so no time limit
DMADF	UK sovereign rating	unlimited	unlimited	6 months
Local authorities	n/a	£10m (per local authority)	£10m	unlimited

	Fund rating**	Money Limit (at time of investment)		Time Limit
Money Market Funds CNAV	AAA	£10m (per fund)	£10m	liquid
Money Market Funds LVNAV	AAA	£10m (per fund)	£10m	liquid
Money Market Funds VNAV	AAA	£10m (per fund)	£10m	liquid
Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit score of 1.25	Dark pink / AAA	£10m (per fund)	£10m	liquid
Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit score of 1.50	Light pink / AAA	£10m (per fund)	£10m	liquid

9. Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream

%	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate
Services	3.0%	0.5%	0.5%	1.6%	4.5%

10. Maturity structure of borrowing

Maturity structure of fixed interest rate borrowing 2021/22		
	Lower	**Upper**
Under 12 months	0%	100%
12 months to 2 years	0%	100%
2 years to 5 years	0%	100%
5 years to 10 years	0%	100%
10 years to 20 years	0%	100%
20 years to 30 years	0%	100%
30 years to 40 years	0%	100%
40 years to 50 years	0%	100%
Maturity structure of variable interest rate borrowing 2021/22		
	Lower	**Upper**
Under 12 months	0%	100%
12 months to 2 years	0%	100%
2 years to 5 years	0%	100%
5 years to 10 years	0%	100%
10 years to 20 years	0%	75%
20 years to 30 years	0%	50%
30 years to 40 years	0%	25%
40 years to 50 years	0%	25%

East Herts Council Report

Audit and Governance Committee

Date: 10 February 2021

Report by: Councillor Geoffrey Williamson, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

Report title: Capital Strategy 2021/22 Onwards

Ward(s) affected: None

Summary

The report contains the Council's Capital Strategy and Minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy for 2021/22 onwards.

RECOMMENDATION FOR AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:

(a) That Members review and comment on the Capital Strategy and Minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy for 2021/22 onwards. ***(Appendix A)***

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 This report proposes that Members scrutinise and comment on the Council's Capital Strategy for 2021/22 onwards.

2.0 Background

2.1 The East Herts Council Capital Strategy provides a valuable opportunity for engagement with Full Council to ensure that overall strategy, investment ambition, risk appetite and governance procedures are fully understood by all elected Members and other Council stakeholders.

2.2 The East Herts Council Capital Strategy is intended to be a strategic corporate document which will both be influenced by and in turn influence policy and decision making in respect of capital investment.

2.3 The Strategy will continue to develop and evolve as external influences do and will be updated as required in order that this Strategy is responsive to the challenges, opportunities, priorities and objectives that the Council must consider.

2.4 The current capital programme was formulated over the last two years. As the council continues to deliver, review and update the capital programme, it will do so within the context of the council's Climate Change commitments, most notably the commitment to the council itself becoming carbon neutral by 2030. To that end, the council has devised a carbon assessment tool which it is now beginning to use to assess its existing major projects. As new proposals for capital funding come forward, a carbon assessment will be included as an integral part of the business case to inform decision-making.

2.5 Progress updates on the council's Sustainability Action Plan are posted on the council's website each month, with greater detail on projects' carbon assessments and the overall assessment of progress against the council's schedule to achieve carbon neutrality to be added shortly.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 Revised reporting was required from the 2019/20 reporting cycle due to revisions of the MHCLG Investment Guidance, the MHCLG Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Guidance, the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code. The primary reporting changes included the introduction of a capital strategy, to provide a longer-term focus to the capital plans, and greater reporting requirements surrounding any commercial activity undertaken under the Localism Act 2011.

3.2 This report includes the third capital strategy since the revisions. The first version of the report was welcomed by Members last year and no comments or suggestions for improvement have been received from either internal or external audit.

4.0 Options

4.1 Update the Capital Strategy as required, at least once annually.

5.0 Risks

5.1 Risks are discussed in detail, within the Capital Strategy, including the uncertainty around future funding.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 No.

Community Safety
Building and refurbishment schemes design out crime and safety issues and public realm works in particular are required to ensure that the community feel safe.

Data Protection
All investment in IT systems are required to check where data is held and that systems comply with data protection legislation.

Equalities
All capital schemes meet the necessary legislation and are subject to access audits. Design also takes into account dementia friendly design elements particularly around colour.

Environmental Sustainability
The council has established a carbon assessment tool that it is beginning to apply to existing capital projects. In the future, a carbon assessment of proposed capital projects will be included within the

overall business case so as to inform decision-making. To date, individual schemes have sustainability features designed into them and may include, for example: meeting BREEAM ratings for buildings and refurbishments; flood resilience and sustainable underground drainage systems; opportunities for renewable energy generation; and carbon reduction such as replacement of the council's internal combustion engine vehicles with battery electric vehicles.

Financial
The strategy guides the capital programme and detailed financial implications are included with that in the budget report.

Health and Safety
All contractors are required to have compliant health and safety policies. Where a health and safety issue requires capital expenditure it will be fast tracked to deal with the issue.

Human Resources
None

Human Rights
None

Legal
A Capital Strategy is a requirement of the Prudential Code which the council is required to follow under the Local Government Act 2003.

Specific Wards
None

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A - East Herts District Council Capital Strategy 2021/22 Onwards

Contact Member	Councillor Geoffrey Williamson, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability *geoffrey.williamson@eastherts.gov.uk*
Contact Officer	Steven Linnett, Head of Strategic Finance and Property Contact Tel No: 01279 502050 *steven.linnett@eastherts.gov.uk*
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Appendix A

Capital Strategy 2021onwards

Contents

Introduction

The East Herts Council Capital Strategy provides a valuable opportunity for engagement with Full Council to ensure that overall strategy, investment ambition; risk appetite and governance procedures are fully understood by all elected Members and other Council stakeholders.

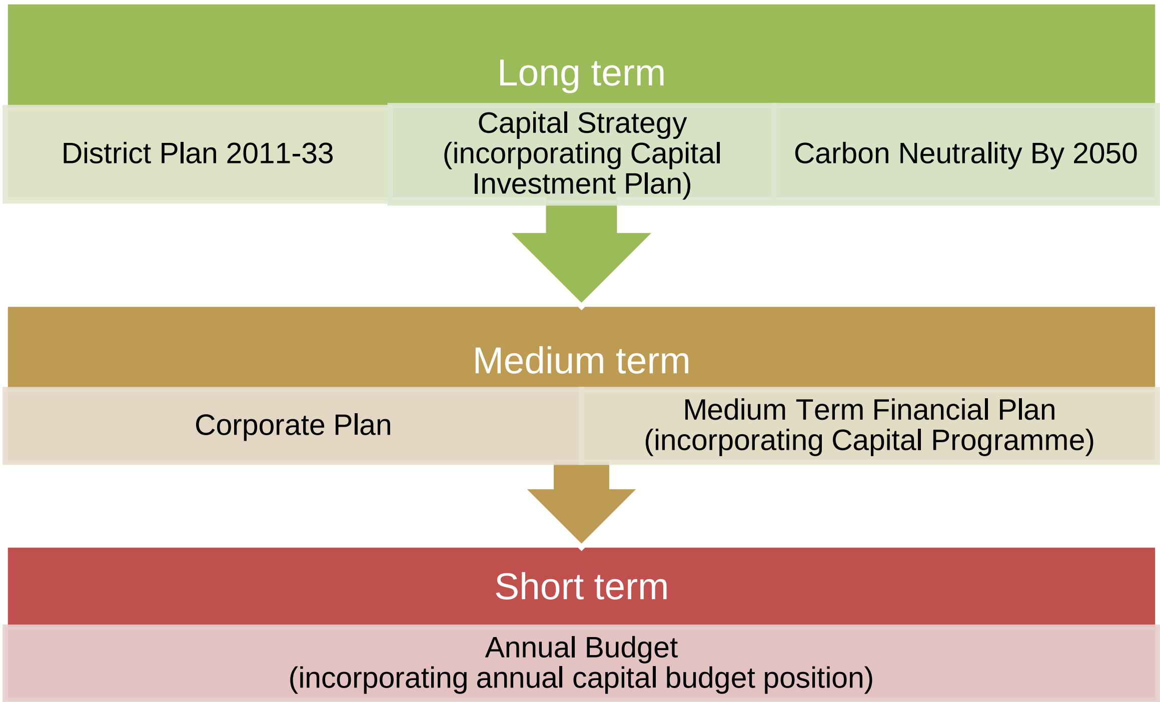
The East Herts Council Capital Strategy is intended to be a strategic corporate document which will both be influenced by and in turn influence policy and decision making in respect of capital investment.

The Strategy will continue to develop and evolve as external influences do and will be updated as required in order that this Strategy is responsive to the challenges, opportunities, priorities and objectives that the Council must consider.

The CIPFA Prudential Code, updated in 2017, includes the requirement for local authorities to produce a Capital Strategy.

The Capital Strategy has not been developed in isolation. The diagram below summarises the relationship between this Capital Strategy and other key corporate strategies and plans.

Figure 1: Long, medium and short term strategic planning at East Herts Council



The Capital Strategy is closely aligned with the priorities and objectives contained within the above, as well as a number of external strategies and plans, which will be explored further in Section 2 of this Strategy.

The East Herts Capital Strategy includes a number of important actions, which will help to implement the Capital Strategy across the organisation and improve overall financial planning in the long term. We recognise the benefits of long term strategic financial planning and therefore this Capital Strategy is seen as key to looking beyond the medium term to fully explore the opportunities which may lie ahead and the role the Council will play in shaping the future for our residents, communities and businesses.

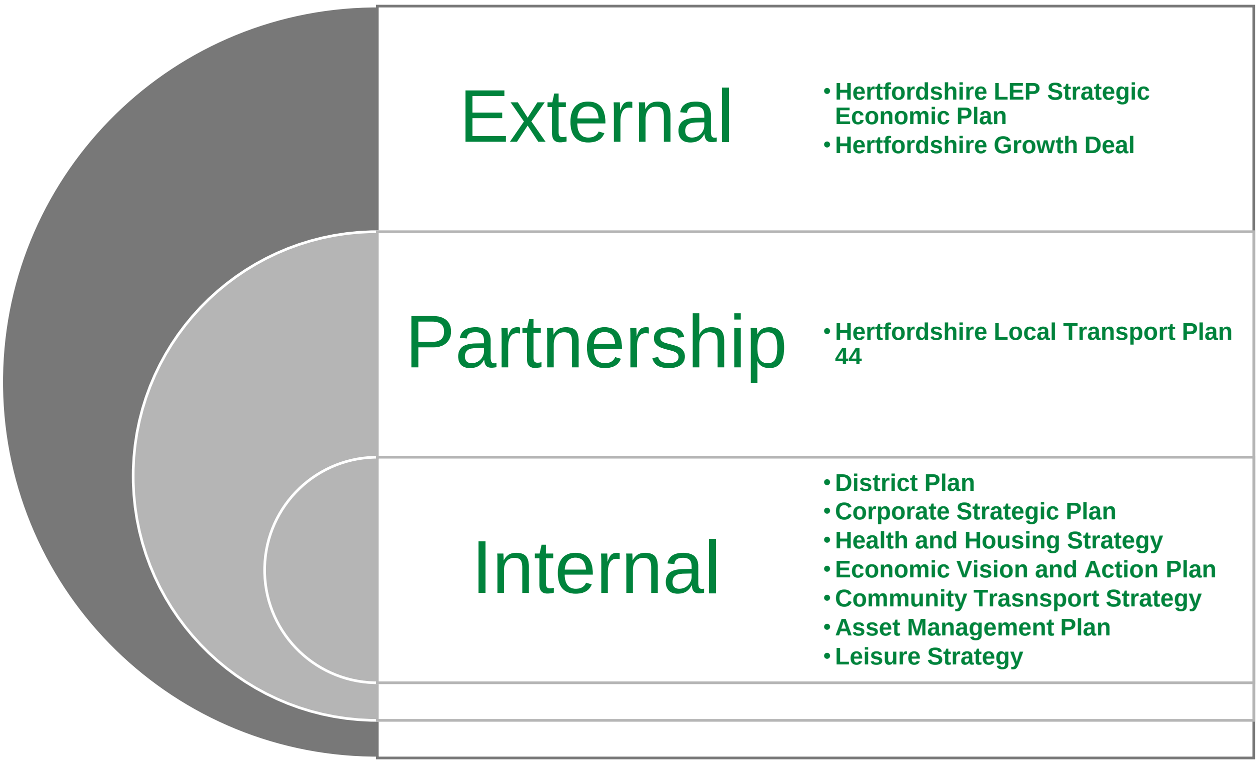
Influences on Capital Investment

The Capital Strategy is influenced by many different factors, which must be taken into account before establishing the appropriate strategy for contributing to the delivery of our corporate priorities.

Our Capital Strategy has considered external, partner and internal influences when shaping our approach. There are many strategies and plans that inform and influence our capital investment plan. It is important to ensure that consideration is given to the aims and objectives that could influence the Council's capital investment ambition over the longer term.

An examination of external and partner influences assists us with supporting decision making on individual capital investment schemes. In future we will therefore use external objectives / targets, alongside our own corporate priorities, to inform decision making when prioritisation needs to be applied to available funding.

Figure 2: Core influences on the Capital Strategy



Our Capital Strategy has taken account of the external, partner and internal influences in shaping our approach. The following sections provide a summary of main points for consideration in each case:

External influences
Hertfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan and Hertfordshire Growth Deal
The strategic priorities, as set out in the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), influence the Council's strategic financial planning direction. The Gilston Area Concept Framework is referenced as a key element of the SEP priorities, with the new Garden Town of Harlow & Gilston acknowledged by government as one of three new Garden Towns nationally.

The new Garden Town initiative for Harlow & Gilston, links through to the now adopted District Plan, working to the detailed Gilston Area Concept Framework and the project governance that is in place via the Gilston Steering Group. The Growth Deal expanded further in 2017, with additional investment of £43.95m. This is on top of £221.5m of government funding already awarded to Hertfordshire to date to invest in its people, places and businesses. The Council made a successful bid for Growth Deal funding for Bishop's Stortford Town Centre, an allocation of £9.6m in the form of grant and loan funding, now fully spent. Link to Hertfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan 2017-30 Link to Hertfordshire Growth Deal
Partnership influences
Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan 4
We acknowledge the Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan and its main objectives. The relationship with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) is very important when considering the longer-term Capital Strategy for the Council. As a planning authority and billing authority, the Council is in a very influential position when it comes to setting the scene for the future development and growth in the area and considering the impact on funding streams at both the County and District level. Each year, we will examine any County capital schemes that are focused in the East Hertfordshire area, in order that the Council has sight of these schemes as they progress and any potential implications they may have for capital schemes being delivered by the Council, particularly related to our property partnership with the County and the green transport plan. Link to Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan 4, 2018 to 2031

Internal influences
District Plan
The vision and strategic objectives contained within the District Plan influence the Council's investment ambition directly. It is important to provide a good view of the long-term impact of the District Plan in the Capital Strategy and the part that the Council's capital investment will play in contributing to meeting the long term needs of the local population and area. The strategic objectives link to important regional activity, such as the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor Core Area, working with partner authorities, namely Broxbourne, Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford across Hertfordshire and Essex County boundaries. The District Plan has strategic influence on the following areas of important investment for the Council: • Housing • Town Centres • Provision of leisure facilities We will ensure that the Capital Strategy demonstrates the links to the District Plan strategic objectives and specific projects, as part of the capital investment plan. Link to District Plan 2011-33 (adopted October 2018)
Corporate Strategic Plan, Economic Vision and Action Plan
The Corporate Strategic Plan drives the Council's capital investment ambition. The Corporate Strategic Plan includes reference to strategic projects for each year against the aims that support the four priority areas. When the Corporate Strategic Plan is refreshed we will ensure that the Capital Strategy links the capital investment plan to the relevant strategic projects and will therefore demonstrate how the Council's capital investment will contribute to the achievement of the Plan priorities and more detailed aims. This will help with the evaluation and prioritisation of future capital schemes, where a

business case needs to consider the contribution to the achievement of priorities, as well as non-financial and financial benefits.

The Economic Vision for East Herts sets out the strategic areas of focus in order to achieve this vision. The Economic Vision is backed up by a detailed action plan, which assists with making links to the Hertfordshire LEP SEP, Corporate Strategic Plan and District Plan.

The Economic Vision picks up the thread for major projects, such as the development of a planning framework for Bishop's Stortford Town Centre, which has since resulted in a significant funding package via the Hertfordshire LEP from the Growth Fund. Also, the London Stansted Cambridge growth corridor initiatives, where mention is made of lobbying for the right infrastructure.

The Council has already achieved success in lobbying and bidding for regional funding. As the Capital Strategy is developed it will further contribute strong evidence of local need and highlight where the Council cannot deliver as an individual authority and / or has not got sufficient available capital resources.

Link to Action Plan

Corporate Plan 2020-2024

Health and Housing Strategy

We recognise that it is important for the objectives in the Health and Housing Strategy to be reflected in the Council's Capital Strategy both from a direct capital investment perspective and an enabling perspective. The Council plays a vital role in ensuring that the District Plan is delivered in terms of projects, housing mix, health focus and timescale.

The Health and Housing Strategy highlights the importance of working in partnership, particularly related to affordable and suitable housing to meet identified needs. Any associated capital investment requirement can be put into this context in the Capital Strategy to demonstrate how this investment is contributing to the achievement of important health and housing targets.

Link to Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2019-23

Emerging Leisure Strategy

It is important to consider the Council's Leisure Facilities Strategy in the Capital Strategy to make the direct strategic link to the capital investment plan. This provides strong justification for the significant current investment and demonstrates why this service area is being prioritised.

These are very important initiatives, which are directed at the Council's community, to improve health and wellbeing across the area, working with health partners, town and parish councils, voluntary sector and community groups. This is important context for the significant capital investment by the Council, already included in the Capital Programme.

As the delivery of the Leisure Facilities Strategy progresses, we will reflect the emerging expected outcomes in future Capital Strategy updates, both from a financial and outcome perspective.

Vision for Leisure Facilities

In order to provide the guiding principles for the proposed direction of travel it was important to work with a vision for leisure centres across East Herts. It is proposed that the vision is one of enabling everyone to have the opportunity to participate. The Council has a pivotal role in providing pay and play opportunities which traditionally are not provided through other sectors. In this context the suggested vision is as follows:

"The Council will provide attractive facilities available to the whole community which complement the wider provision of recreation opportunities in the community and voluntary sector. In addition, it will ensure that leisure facilities contribute fully to the health and wellbeing objectives of the Council."

Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre Development Project

Hartham Leisure Centre Redevelopment Project

Asset Management Plan
The importance of the link between the Asset Management Plan (AMP), and its constituent asset categories, is stressed in the CIPFA Prudential Code. There is no doubt that the Asset Management Plan should inform the Capital Strategy, but this also works both ways. The vision and ambition that is articulated in the Capital Strategy should set the scene for the direction that the asset management, in any particular area of operation, should take. There is an emphasis on the investment property portfolio in the aims, priorities and ambitions in the AMP. Highlighting the Council's good management of the current portfolio and the approach to due diligence and strong decision making for new property investment. There is also an emphasis on town centre improvements, which links to major projects, such as the work in Bishop's Stortford and the master-planning in the District Plan. The key improvement priorities have been mapped to corporate priorities, outcomes, key milestones and timescales in the current AMP. We will ensure that this links effectively with the capital investment plan as work gets underway to refresh the AMP over the coming year. Link to Asset Management Plan
Financial Sustainability Policy
As a result of the changes to the PWLB borrowing rules which prohibit investment principally for yield this section will be updated in due course, once guidance becomes clearer and the Financial Sustainability Committee has had time to consider an alternative strategy, that concentrates on investment in infrastructure which will yield income but is being principally provided to meet targets such as the district being carbon neutral by 2050.

Environmental Sustainability

One of the council's corporate goals is *to put sustainability at the heart of everyone we do*. Council unanimously made a Climate Change Declaration in July 2019. This was accompanied by nine specific commitments to tackling climate change including the council becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

As the council continues to deliver, review and update its capital strategy and programme, it will do so within the context of these nine Climate Change commitments. Notably, the council has devised a carbon assessment methodology which it will use to assess its existing major projects. As new proposals for capital funding come forward, a carbon assessment will be included as an integral part of the accompanying business case to inform decision-making.

Progress updates on the council's Sustainability Action Plan are posted on the council's website each month, with greater detail on projects' carbon assessments and the overall assessment of progress against the council's schedule to achieve carbon neutrality to be added shortly.

Core influences action plan:

Action	Why is this required?	Responsibility	Timescale
We will ensure that the Capital Strategy demonstrates the links to the **District Plan** strategic objectives and specific projects, as part of the development of the capital investment plan	In order to identify how we can strengthen our decision making and prioritisation process, informing what we are doing directly towards these objectives via capital investment	Leadership Team	During 2021/22
When the **Corporate Strategic Plan** is refreshed we will ensure that the Capital Strategy links the capital investment plan to the relevant strategic projects	In order to continue to demonstrate how the Council's capital investment will contribute to the achievement of the Corporate Strategic Plan priorities and more detailed aims	Strategic Finance & Property, S151 Officer	In line with Corporate Strategic Plan refresh timescale

Action	Why is this required?	Responsibility	Timescale
As the delivery of the **Leisure Facilities Strategy** progresses, we will reflect the emerging expected outcomes in future Capital Strategy updates, both from a financial and outcome perspective	In order to demonstrate the importance of this major element of the capital investment plan and the intended outcomes for the future	Strategic Finance & Property, S151 Officer	During 2021/22
The key improvement priorities have been mapped to corporate priorities, outcomes, key milestones and timescales in the current **Asset Management Plan**, we will ensure that this links effectively with the capital investment plan as	In order to strengthen the influence of the AMP on the Capital Strategy and also enable the Capital Strategy intention and ambition to inform the emerging refreshed AMP	Leadership Team	In line with AMP refresh timescale

Action	Why is this required?	Responsibility	Timescale
work gets underway to refresh the AMP over the coming year.			
In order to deliver the council's Climate Change commitments, the capital strategy will continue to be developed with regard to the nine commitments, including evaluating the carbon impact of existing and emerging capital projects.	This action is integral to achieving the council's Climate Change commitments, notably, that the council will become carbon neutral by 2030	Head of Housing & Health	During 2021/22 and ongoing in line with individual capital project timescales

Capital investment ambition by Corporate Priority

The intention of this section is to set out the long-term ambition for capital investment in terms of the contribution made towards achieving the priorities identified in the Council's Corporate Strategic Plan. The future intention will be to articulate the capital investment plan in terms of achievement of priorities, intended outcomes for all key stakeholders and intended timescales.

The Corporate Strategic Plan priority initiatives are currently going through the approval process. To demonstrate our current approach ahead of producing a longer-term capital investment plan, we have set out the Corporate Strategic Plan initiatives below which relate to capital investment:

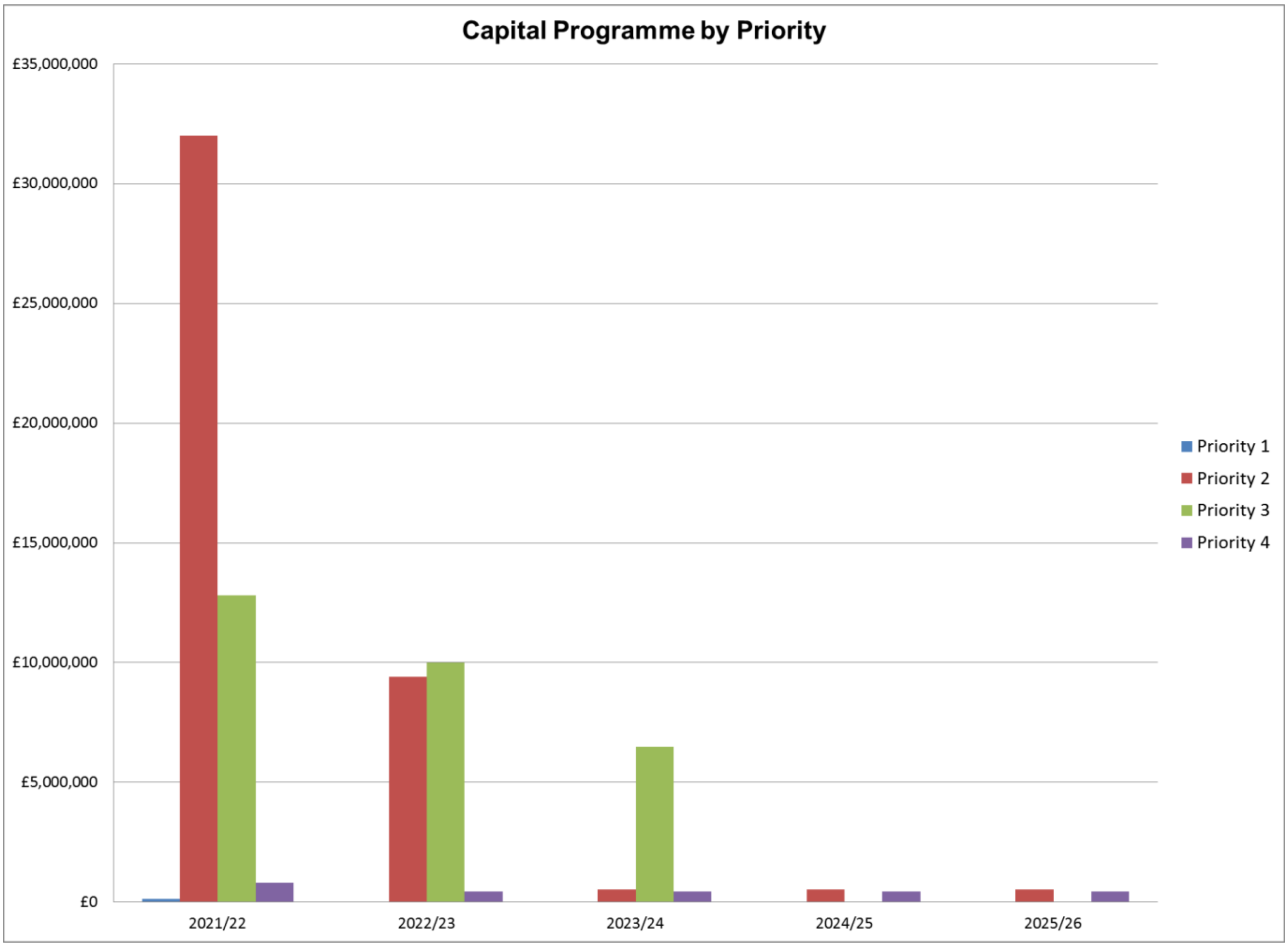
Priority	Aims and initiatives
Priority 1: Sustainability at the heart of everything we do	***We will make changes to our own premises, people and services*** • Making direct investment in energy efficiency schemes: for example, energy efficiency measures in leisure capital schemes; installing/upgrading LED lighting in our buildings and car parks – **Ongoing** ***We will use our regulatory powers to promote action by others*** Installing rapid e-chargers in support of move to more e-taxis – **Ongoing** ***We will influence and encourage behaviour change*** • Providing financial incentives to increase sustainability: for example insulation grants and loans – **Ongoing**
Priority 2: Enabling our	***We will invest in our places*** • Investing £36m in our Leisure Centres in Hertford, Bishop's Stortford and Buntingford – **Ongoing**

Priority	Aims and initiatives
communities	• Investing £20m in Hertford Theatre – **Ongoing** • Delivering improvements in our green spaces (e.g. Castle Park) – **Ongoing** • Providing community grants – **Ongoing** ***We will ensure all voices in the community are heard*** • Growing our digital communication channels (twitter, Facebook, Instagram, network) to keep residents informed – **Ongoing** ***We will support our vulnerable residents*** • Delivering affordable homes – **Ongoing** • Increasing and improving our Homeless Accommodation – **Ongoing**
Priority 3: Encouraging economic growth	***We will develop new sources of income*** • Delivering Financial Sustainability through Green agenda investment purchases – **Ongoing** ***We will support business growth*** • Delivering the Old River Lane project to improve Bishop's Stortford Town Centre – **Ongoing** • Expanding the Launchpad – **Ongoing** ***We will create viable places*** • Delivering the district plan – **Ongoing** • Ensuring developer contributions are used effectively – **Ongoing** •
Priority 4: Digital by design	***We will improve the customer experience for those who use council services*** • Increase our investment in digital technology – **Ongoing** ***We will work with partners to ensure our communities are digitally enabled*** • Delivering Harlow and Gilston Garden Town as a fully sustainable and digital 'place' – **Ongoing**

Priority	Aims and initiatives
	• Agreeing a countywide digital infrastructure strategy – **Ongoing** •

The planned capital investment programme for 2021/22 onwards, from an expenditure perspective, is undergoing the same approval process as this strategy. At this stage we have undertaken a simple mapping exercise to demonstrate the contribution of planned capital investment to each Corporate Strategic Plan priority. This will be developed further as the Capital Strategy is strengthened during 2021/22.

Figure 3: Capital Programme by Corporate Priority



Links between the 5-year capital programme and the corporate priorities are provided at Appendix 1.

Corporate priority action plan:

Action	Why is this required?	Responsibility	Timescale
As the **longer-term capital investment plan** emerges, we will undertake a more detailed mapping exercise against each capital scheme – initially in the capital programme and eventually in the longer-term capital investment plan	This will assist Members and other key stakeholders recognise the contribution that the capital investment is making towards the achievement of the Council's corporate priorities	Strategic Finance & Property, S151 Officer	During 2021/22
As the refreshed **Corporate Strategic Plan** emerges, we will ensure that the existing capital investment plan is reviewed to ensure that all planned	This will ensure that existing investment plans still meet the identified needs of the District and emerging pipeline schemes are aligned to the newly approved priorities	Strategic Finance & Property, S151 Officer	In line with Corporate Strategic Plan refresh timescale

Action	Why is this required?	Responsibility	Timescale
schemes align with the updated corporate priorities			

Commercial Investment Strategy

In our Financial Sustainability Policy, we set out a vision statement:

For East Hertfordshire District Council to be an innovative authority that safeguards its future through maximising financial independence from government funding sources. It will do this by raising its own revenue through non-traditional ways and smarter spending. Financial sustainability is about ensuring the council can continue to discharge its duties to the public whilst keeping a balanced and sustainable budget, proving itself a responsible custodian of the public purse.

We also set out our intention, saying that we will:

- Move into other areas of business to raise revenue from new sources
- Find newer and more efficient ways of working
- Explore new ways of working with business and charity sector as an enabler, not just provider

As a result of the changes to the PWLB borrowing rules which prohibit investment principally for yield this section will be updated in due course once guidance becomes clearer and the Financial Sustainability Committee has had time to consider an alternative strategy that concentrates on investment in infrastructure which will yield income but is being principally provided to meet targets such as the district being carbon neutral by 2050.

Millstream Property Investments Limited

In line with the Council's corporate priorities, and commercial investment ambition, Millstream Property Investments Limited was incorporated in February 2018.

The council, as the company's sole shareholder, has entered into a Shareholder Agreement with the company. The Shareholder Agreement obliges the company to annually review its business plan and produce a revised 30-year business plan, rebasing the forthcoming financial year as the first year of this 30-year period.

The Millstream Business Plan is under review, in light of the changes to the PWLB borrowing rules detailed above.

Capital Investment Plan

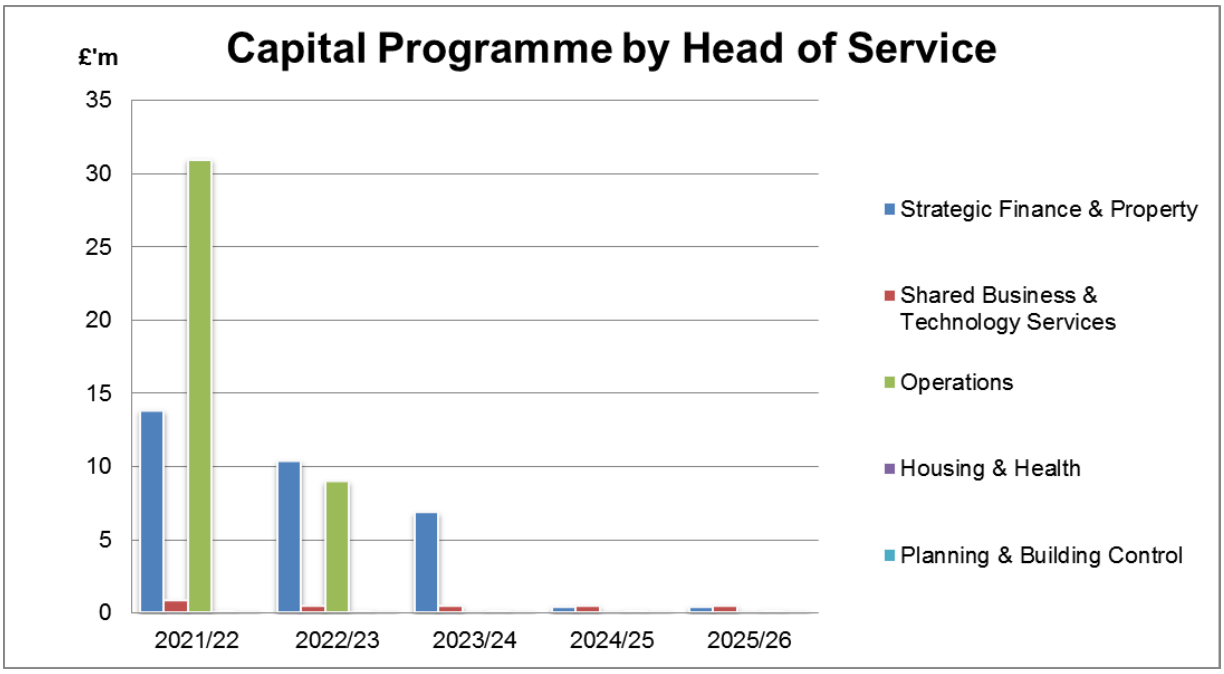
The following sections examine our starting point for a longer-term capital investment plan, the additional analysis that informs our Capital Strategy principles, our capacity to deliver and the potential options for addressing our capital investment ambition gap. We recognise that our Capital Programme currently plans for investment over a five-year period, which is a medium-term view and there is further work to do to extend our plans up to 10 years.

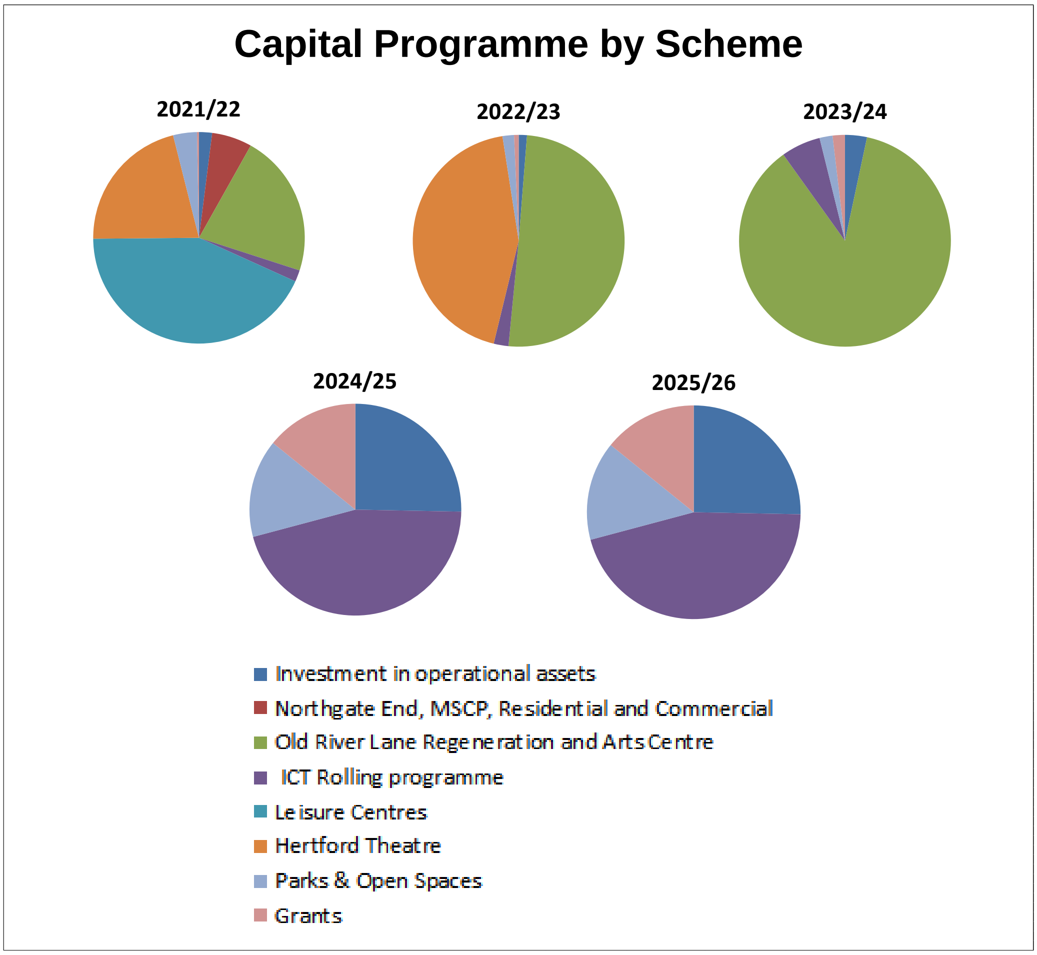
When our strategic planning becomes more mature, and we have identified our plans beyond the four-year horizon, we will update our process for evaluation and prioritisation, to ensure that there is clarity on the level of affordability, based on available capital resources, including a potential borrowing position. It is also important for the Council to establish its potential lobbying position to seek to secure future funding packages from appropriate funding bodies, building on successful bids to date.

We will ensure that our risk assessment examines the risk against the affordability and deliverability assumptions, as the longer-term capital investment plan emerges, and this will inform the ongoing review of performance and update of the capital investment plan to ensure that it is effectively managed.

The following charts provide a view of the current five-year investment plan from an expenditure perspective by Head of Service:

Figure 4: Capital Programme by Head of Service





Approach to capital investment prioritisation

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is refreshed annually to accommodate changes in service delivery and financial landscape. Service and financial planning are combined in one report, which demonstrates that we have got an integrated approach to financial planning both from a revenue and capital perspective.

The MTFP is forecast over a 4-year period, in line with the Council's general corporate planning approach. The MTFP sets out the national policy context and describes the impact of this at a local level. It must be recognised that, when looking at a four-year period, the current level of uncertainty makes this an increasingly challenging exercise.

When considering an appropriate long-term period for the Capital Strategy, we are potentially looking at a 20-30 year period but a more realistic period for the capital investment plan, say up to 10 years. This longer-term approach enables a much more robust 5-year Capital Programme forecast and a strong annual budget.

We recognise that the MTFP should be able to articulate the Council's revenue and capital investment plans in the context of a longer-term approach. On this basis, our view is that the MTFP approach needs to be dynamic and aligned to the Council's Corporate Strategic Plan priorities, following an appropriately detailed business planning approach. We feel that the budget setting and service planning process goes a long way towards achieving this approach, however, when it comes to the capital planning process we recognise that we need the process to be less reactive and much more proactive.

As stated in the January 2021 Budget report, the capital programme for 2021/22 onwards contains a number of ongoing major projects and also the rolling capital schemes agreed in previous years.

Currently the review of the Capital programme is undertaken as part of the quarterly health-check report. Any additions to the programme require a funding request to be made through the appropriate governance process. This process is defined by the value of the capital bid.

The council is likely to undertake a further significant capital scheme at the Old River Lane, Bishop's Stortford site, within the medium term. The scope and funding arrangements for this scheme are still in the early stages of project planning. However, it should be noted that East Herts may need to give careful consideration to its reserves provision in the forthcoming years and will require a borrowing facility within this medium term financial period.

As any new schemes are agreed and the funding requirements become more definite they will be included in the capital programme presented within the quarterly health-check report.

As we develop the Capital Strategy we intend this to become better informed over time and strengthened by the capital investment plan, which will stretch up to 10 years. We recognise that it is important to identify all required capital investment commitments, to ensure that all existing capital commitments are required, particularly in light of any refresh of the Corporate Strategic Plan, and those potential commitments from emerging new proposals and ideas are reflected.

We also recognise that, if we have any business as usual commitment missing from our capital investment plan, capital schemes that will no longer deliver against corporate priorities, known capital investment ambition not reflected and a short to medium term delivery profile, it is difficult for us to have a strong capital financing requirement, which in turn will not give us a good view of our potential borrowing requirement in the future.

As we develop our Capital Strategy further in the coming financial year we will make sure that our capital investment plan is comprehensive and profiled realistically, so that the revenue consequence, both positive and negative, are as robust and risk aware as possible, to feed into the budget and the medium term financial plan.

Capital investment plan action plan

Action	Why is this required?	Responsibility	Timescale
Agree **an appropriate long-term period** for the Capital Strategy – potentially up to 20 years, based on the timeframe of the Council's current strategies, plans and commercial activity	To enable the Council to plan much more effectively for the future – affording time to be clear about risk appetite, management of risk and management of financial resilience	Council	During 2021/22

Action	Why is this required?	Responsibility	Timescale
Develop a **longer-term capital investment plan** – potentially up to 10 years, based on an appropriate timescale to suit the agreed period of the Capital Strategy	To enable the Council to improve its capital planning process, strengthen the Capital Programme and assist the effectiveness of delivery against plan	Leadership Team	During 2021/22
Improve the **integration with the Council's financial plans and strategies** – particularly the MTFP, Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy and Reserves Strategy	To enable an overall view of the Council's delivery of a prudent, affordable and sustainable capital investment plan that contributes positively to the achievement of the Council's corporate priorities	Strategic Finance & Property, S151 Officer	During 2021/22

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy statement

Minimum Revenue Provision

Where the council 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 council to have regard to the MHCLG Guidance on Minimum Revenue Provision, the most recent edition of which was issued in 2018.

The council is legally obliged to "have regard" to the guidance, which is intended to enable a more flexible approach to assessing the amount of annual provision than was required under the previous statutory requirements. The guidance offers four main options under which MRP could be made, with an overriding recommendation that the Council should make prudent provision to redeem its debt liability over a period which is reasonably commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure is estimated to provide benefits. The requirement to 'have regard' to the guidance therefore means that:

1. Although four main options are recommended in the guidance, there is no intention to be prescriptive by making these the only methods of charge under which a local authority may consider its MRP to be prudent; and
2. It is the responsibility of each authority to decide upon the most appropriate method of making a prudent provision, after having had regard to the guidance.

There is no requirement to charge MRP where the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) is nil or negative at the end of the preceding financial year.

The guidance also provides for the ability to reclaim any charges made over the statutory minimum revenue provision (MRP), voluntary revenue provision (VRP) or overpayments, if deemed necessary or prudent. A detailed analysis of the council's Capital Finance Requirement and the balance sheet, in preparation for the Capital Financing Requirement turning positive and therefore MRP becoming payable, indicates that there is an historic set aside from capital receipts to repay debt of £117,406,522.84 as of 1 April 2007. This balance is fully cash backed and is evidenced by matching cash and investment balances each year in the balance sheet.

In order for this sum to be reclaimed for use in the budget, this policy must disclose the cumulative overpayment position each year. It is also necessary to adjust this balance to take into account financing of capital expenditure and long term investment decisions made prior to 1 April 2020. This position is shown in the table below is tracked from 2007/08 when the Capital Adjustments Account was established. The table includes estimated capital expenditure to be financed from borrowing in 2020/21:

Capital Receipts set aside for the repayment of debt

Year	Bfwd	Borrowing	Investment	Cfwd
2007/08	117,406,522.84	-7,894,055.77		109,512,467.07
2008/09	109,512,467.07			109,512,467.07
2009/10	109,512,467.07			109,512,467.07
2010/11	109,512,467.07			109,512,467.07
2011/12	109,512,467.07	-483,360.33		109,029,106.74
2012/13	109,029,106.74	-1,942,095.36		107,087,011.38
2013/14	107,087,011.38	-1,886,443.19		105,200,568.19
2014/15	105,200,568.19	0.00		105,200,568.19
2015/16	105,200,568.19	-18,815,490.41	-19,999,996.01	66,385,081.77
2016/17	66,385,081.77	0.00		66,385,081.77
2017/18	66,385,081.77	0.00		66,385,081.77
2018/19	66,385,081.77	0.00		66,385,081.77
2019/20	66,385,081.77	-4,531,075.15		61,854,006.62
2020/21	61,854,006.62	-26,731,000.00[1]		35,123,006.62

[1] Projected expenditure

Members should note that the capital receipts set aside to repay debt are cash backed and the use of these receipts to repay debt will result in the council permanently foregoing investment income from the cash balances, with the exception of the £20 million long term investments in the two property funds. That investment has been deducted from the available cash backed receipts in 2015/16 in the table above and the cash would remain available for investment or repaying debt in the future. The £7.894 million of historic debt brought forward has been deducted from the total set aside balance in 2007/08 n and £6 million was repaid on the loan maturity date in 2019/20 using the set aside allowance.

The council's Capital Financing Requirement will become positive in 2020/21 therefore the council's policy is to repay debt incurred on capital expenditure between 2011/12 and 2019/20 during March 2021 in order that no MRP is required to be set aside on that debt. The 2020/21loan debt will be repaid in 2021/22 and therefore no MRP will be required to be made for 2020/21 borrowing for completed assets. For 2021/22 and future years the Council will assess MRP in accordance with the main recommendations contained within the guidance issued by the Secretary of State under section 21(1A) of the Local Government Act 2003. The options available to the Council are as follows.

Option 1: Regulatory Method

Under the previous MRP regulations, MRP was set at a uniform rate of 4% of the CFR on a reducing balance method (which in effect meant that MRP charges would stretch into infinity). This historic approach requires the council to operate as if the 22088must continue for all capital expenditure incurred in operate as if the 2008 amending Regulations had not revoked Regulation 28 and is only really advantageous to those authorities operating a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to allow them to take advantage of adjustments relating to HRA debt. It can also only be used for new capital expenditure up to the amount which is deemed to be supported through the Supported Capital Expenditure annual allocation which is no longer published by the Government.

Option 2: Capital Financing Requirement Method

This is a variation on option 1 which is based upon a charge of 4% of the aggregate CFR without any adjustment for Adjustment A, or certain other factors which were brought into account under the previous statutory MRP calculation. The CFR is the measure of an authority's outstanding debt liability as depicted by their balance sheet.

Option 3: Asset Life Method

This method may be applied to most new capital expenditure, including where desired that which may alternatively continue to be treated under options 1 or 2.

Under this option, it is intended that MRP should be spread over the estimated useful life of either an asset created, or other purpose of the expenditure. There are two useful advantages of this option:

1. Longer life assets e.g. freehold land can be charged over a longer period than would arise under options 1 and 2 subject to a maximum life of 50 year for undeveloped land but developed land can have the same life as the asset on it and that can exceed 50 years; and
2. No MRP charges need to be made until the financial year after that in which an item of capital expenditure is fully incurred and, in the case of a new asset, comes into service use (this is often referred to as being an 'MRP holiday'). This is not available under options 1 and 2.

There are two methods of calculating charges under option 3:

1. equal instalment method – equal annual instalments; or
2. annuity method – annual payments gradually increase during the life of the asset.

Option 4: Depreciation Method

Under this option, MRP charges are to be linked to the useful life of each type of asset using the standard accounting rules for depreciation (but with some exceptions) i.e. this is a more complex approach than option 3. The same conditions apply regarding the date of completion of the new expenditure as apply under option 3.

Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2021/22

The Council's policy is to first utilise the available set aside capital receipts and will repay in full the debt relating to fully incurred capital expenditure or new assets brought into use in the first full year after they are brought into use. Once the available set aside capital receipts balance has been fully utilised to repay debt the Council, having evaluated the options for its MRP policy in respect of capital expenditure incurred, considers that the Asset Life - Equal Instalment Method is the most appropriate for it to use. This provides for a reduction in the borrowing need over approximately the useful life of the asset.

Estimated life periods will be determined by the Head of Strategic Finance and Property. To the extent that expenditure is not on the creation of an asset and is of a type that is subject to estimated life periods that are referred to in the guidance, these periods will generally be adopted by the council. However, the council reserves the right to determine useful life periods and prudent MRP in exceptional circumstances where the recommendations of the guidance would not be appropriate.

As some types of capital expenditure incurred by the Council are not capable of being related to an individual asset, asset lives will be assessed on a basis which most reasonably reflects the anticipated period of benefit that arises from the expenditure. Also, whatever type of expenditure is involved, it will be grouped together in a manner which reflects the nature of the main component of expenditure and will only be divided up in cases where there are two or more major components with substantially different useful economic lives.

Repayments included in finance leases are applied as MRP.

Risk Management

Risk Management Strategy

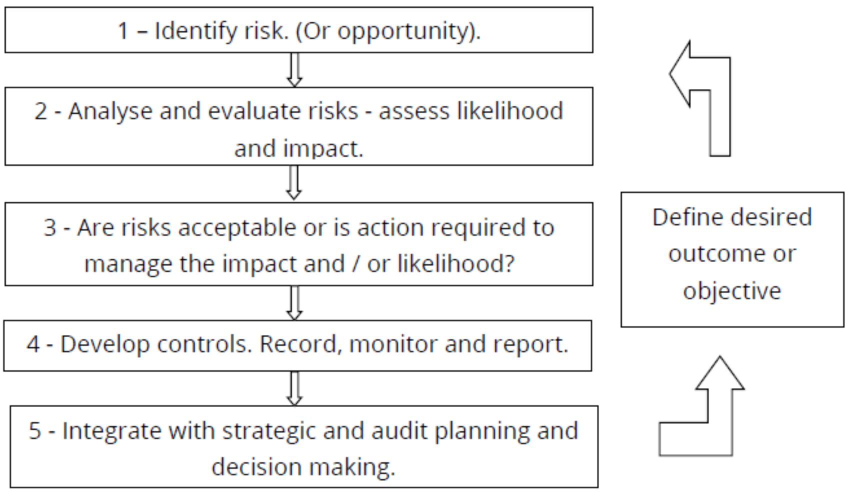
The Council's Risk Management Strategy was last reviewed in spring 2019 and is reviewed on an annual basis.

The Strategy contains a clear definition of risk management as follows:

The process which aims to help organisations understand, evaluate and take action on all their risks with a view to increasing the probability of their success and reducing the likelihood of their failure. (Source: The Institute of Risk Management).

The five stages of risk management are summarised in the diagram below, extracted from the Risk Management Strategy.

Figure 5: Stages of Risk Management



Risk Evaluation and Risk Appetite

The Risk Management Strategy includes a scoring matrix to be used in analysing and evaluating risks as outlined in the image overleaf.

Figure 6: Risk Scoring Mechanism

4 - HIGH >£300,000 and / or national criticism and / or catastrophic fall in service quality				
3 – MEDIUM £150,000 to £300,000 and / or regional criticism and / or major long term fall in service quality		CONTINGENCY	CRITICAL	
2 – LOW £50,000 to £150,000 and / or long term local media criticism and / or minor long term or major short term fall in service quality		CONTROL	CAUTION	
1 - NEGLIGIBLE <£50,000 and / or short term local media criticism and / or short term fall in service quality				
IMPACT / LIKELIHOOD	**1 - RARE** The event could occur in exceptional circumstances	**2 - UNLIKELY** The event could occur less frequently than every three years	**3 - POSSIBLE** The event is likely to occur within, or more than one in three years	**4 - PROBABLE** The event is likely to occur within a year

The Strategy includes a definition of the Council's risk appetite i.e. the level of risk that it is prepared to tolerate without need for ongoing monitoring or reporting.
A material risk is deemed to be any risk rated higher than 2:2 on the scoring mechanism above. Where a risk rating exceeds this 'control' area of tolerance, demonstrable evidence of how risks are being mitigated will be required, together with proposals for future controls.

The Risk Management Strategy acknowledges that with increasing pressure on public finances, Local Authorities are obliged to have more appetite for risk. The Council cannot deliver everything it would ideally like to deliver and tough choices are necessary. The Council is therefore open to considering all delivery options, accepting increased levels of risk in order to secure the successful outcomes or rewards.
Risk management is essential in supporting innovation and moving from a 'risk averse' to a more 'risk aware' approach. An example is the acquisition of Old River Lane, Bishop's Stortford. The financial commitment is significant but the acquisition provides an opportunity to shape the town centre, and an additional income stream.

Roles and responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities are contained within the Risk Management Strategy and summarised here for ease of reference:

Role	Responsibility
Elected Members	Elected Members are responsible for governing the delivery of services to the local community. Members have a responsibility to understand the strategic risks that the Council faces, and will be made aware of how these risks are being managed. All Members will have the responsibility to consider the risks associated with the decisions they undertake and will be informed of these risks in the reports that are submitted to them. They cannot seek to avoid or delegate this overall responsibility, as it is key to their stewardship responsibilities. All Members can access strategic risks on Pentana Performance (formerly called Covalent).
Full Council	Full Council recognises the importance of effective risk management and considers risk management issues when making decisions.
Executive	To receive an annual report regarding the content of the Strategic Risk Register, then three exception reports each year detailing any change in risk scoring and the reasons why. Agree the Risk Management Strategy on an annual basis, or if significant changes require a revision.

Role	Responsibility
	Agree / set the Council's risk appetite. Allocate sufficient resources to address top risks
Performance, Audit and Governance Oversight Committee	To develop policy options and to review and scrutinise the policies of the Council including Risk Management. To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management and corporate governance in the Council. Receive an annual report regarding the content of the Strategic Risk Register, then three exception reports each year detailing any change in risk scoring and the reasons why.
Chief Executive and Leadership Team	To ensure that effective systems of risk management and internal control are in place to support the Corporate Governance of the Council. Take a leading role in identifying and managing the risks and opportunities to the Council and to set the example and standards for all staff. Advise the Executive and Council on the risk management framework, policy, strategy and processes. Advise on the management of strategic and other significant risks. Ensure that the Policy and Strategy are communicated, understood and implemented by all Members, managers and staff. To report to Members on the management of strategic risks.

Role	Responsibility
	To ensure that the risk management process is part of all major projects, partnerships and change management initiatives.
Heads of Service	To be individually responsible for their service risks. Be actively involved in the identification and assessment of risks through the service planning process. Ensure that all reports of a strategic nature written for Members include risk commentary. To implement the detail of the Risk Management Strategy and risk related corporate policies, e.g. Health and Safety, Data Protection. Ensure that significant service risks are considered by Leadership Team quarterly.
Strategic Finance and Property	Co-ordinate risk management activities and prepare related reports for management and Members. Review and develop the Risk Management Strategy and processes. Facilitate / arrange risk management training for staff and Members. To co-ordinate the Business Continuity Plan. Support the risk based audit planning process.
Shared Internal Audit Service	To provide assurance to the Council through an independent and objective opinion on the control environment comprising risk management, control procedures and governance. To provide an annual Audit Plan that is based on a

Role	Responsibility
	reasonable evaluation of risk, and to provide an annual assurance statement to the Council based on work undertaken in the previous year. Review and challenge the effectiveness of the risk management framework.

Monitoring

Existing controls of strategic risks, their adequacy, new mitigation measures and associated action planning information are to be recorded on the Strategic Risk Register.

Strategic risks are subject to one detailed annual report with quarterly reports on an exception basis only.

Capital Risk Register

Risk Category	Description of Risk / Uncertainty	Mitigating Factors	Timescale (review or implementation)	Owner	Residual Risk Score
Political	Change in local government structures	Timetable for any reorganisation would fall outside the substantial capital programme proposed an as already committed would not be stopped by a reorganisation prohibition on items not programmed to use up resources and deny them to the successor authority	Quarterly	Chief Executive	6

Risk Category	Description of Risk / Uncertainty	Mitigating Factors	Timescale (review or implementation)	Owner	Residual Risk Score
Finance	There is uncertainty around future funding, both from Government and other areas such as income from commodities markets for recycled materials. The approach used in the MRP Policy of utilising set aside capital receipts from pre-2007 which can only be utilised for the repayment of borrowing to be applied to repay borrowing of the capital programme utilising the cash that backed the receipts is subject to validation by the external	Funding situation is being carefully monitored. Financial Sustainability Committee to consider infrastructure investment. Approach has been sent to CIPFA for comments. Capital Receipts balance and backing cash resources are proven to exist in the Balance Sheet. EHDC situation is unique and if external auditors raise issues a referral to MHCLG to	Ongoing	Head of Strategic Finance & Property	7

Risk Category	Description of Risk / Uncertainty	Mitigating Factors	Timescale (review or implementation)	Owner	Residual Risk Score
	auditor	issue a Determination to allow the receipts to be used will be made.			
Social					
Technological					
Legislative / Legal	Challenges to legal powers being employed to deliver capital ambition	Robust technical, expert and legal advice to be sought as required in order to demonstrate that the Council's actions are justified	Ongoing	Head of Legal & Democratic Services	6

Risk Category	Description of Risk / Uncertainty	Mitigating Factors	Timescale (review or implementation)	Owner	Residual Risk Score
Continuity / service delivery	Risk of not having capacity / capability and flexibility to continue to deliver service levels over time.	Services are structured to ensure their service offers meet customer demand and are efficient and effective. The Transformation Programme will drive digital self-service for customers and agile working will reduce the need for office accommodation space.	Ongoing	Heads of Service	4

Risk Category	Description of Risk / Uncertainty	Mitigating Factors	Timescale (review or implementation)	Owner	Residual Risk Score
	Risk of lack of defined process resulting in disrupted service delivery as decision making processes are impaired	Standard business cases, project evaluation and scoring mechanisms to aid decision making and prioritisation of resources	12 months	Head of Comms, Policy & Strategy	5
Environmental	Development of Old River Lane, Bishop's Stortford: impact on surrounding area	Site options being developed by urban designers and property consultants. Discussions ongoing with other partners such as Hertfordshire County Council, South Mills and Bishop's Stortford Town	Ongoing	Head of Strategic Finance & Property	5

Risk Category	Description of Risk / Uncertainty	Mitigating Factors	Timescale (review or implementation)	Owner	Residual Risk Score
		Council, to ensure any enabling parts of the site are ready			
	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre built on a flood plain resulting in risk of flooding of the ground floor areas.	The building is located on the boundary of the very low and no risk zone. Design and Access statement, flood risk strategy, and drainage plan produced resulting in 64% less drainage outflow. Plant located on the north side and all on raised plinths.	Ongoing	Head of Operations	5

Risk Management action plan

Action	Why is this required?	Responsibility	Timescale
Monitor operational and strategic risks and update relevant risk registers accordingly, reporting strategic risks annually or quarterly by exception	In order that opportunities are explored in full in a timely fashion, and that risks are acknowledged and managed effectively through project lifecycles	All	As required and at least on a quarterly basis

Capital Investment Appraisal Process

Note: Due to the current high level of approved capital spend and affordability, there are currently no new capital schemes for approval and none expected, other than a potential re-configuration of the Old River Lane, Bishops Stortford, scheme.

Business planning process

The current business planning process for developing investment proposals to be included within the Council's future financial plans is summarised in the diagram below.

Figure 7: Business Planning Process

Summer	Autumn	Winter	Spring
• New capital investment proposals drafted	• Management Team consider draft proposals	• Elected Members consider draft proposals	• Elected Members approve capital investment proposals

New proposals are developed by individual Project Managers, approved for consideration at service level by the Head of Service / Directorate following which, the proposals will be considered by Leadership Team and successful proposals will progress for consideration and approval as part of the annual budget cycle.

Investment proposals – consultation and stakeholder engagement

Consultation and engagement is a key part of developing individual proposals and will be tailored to the individual proposal and relevant stakeholders both internal and external to the Council. Stakeholder engagement and consultation can take place throughout the lifecycle of a proposal (from initiation to close down) and the outputs of any engagement or consultation undertaken should be used to inform the proposal as this progresses.

The diagram overleaf summarises the elements to consider in developing capital investment proposals.

Figure 8: Stakeholder engagement and consultation in developing investment proposals

Developing capital investment proposals – description of current processes

Project and Service Managers are encouraged to consider a range of options in developing individual proposals to determine an appropriate way forward, and to capture project details as a business case. However, although new proposals are required to develop a business case, there is as yet no standardised business case template used consistently across the Council to capture key information. This can lead to gaps in information being captured.

The Council has therefore identified that a standardised business case template is required, to support Officers in recording and maintaining project information and inform decision making. Business case must include estimates of capital costs, revenue implications and how the individual

proposal aligns with Council plans and strategies and any partnership or external plans and strategies as relevant. Risks should also be documented as part of developing the proposal, along with mitigating actions and relevant timescales. Business cases would then be maintained throughout the lifecycle of a project to maintain accurate information relating to delivery and lessons learned should be captured as part of project closure reports.

Prioritising capital investment

The intention is for the standardised business cases referenced above to then be subject to a standardised evaluation process, the outcome of which will be the prioritised capital investment programme. Local authorities continue to face financial challenges and as a result, the need to prioritise and target investment is ever present.

The Council has identified that in order to effectively assess investment proposals against one another, a standardised evaluation process and scoring mechanism may be beneficial to help aid decision making and prioritise investment.

Project appraisal process action plan

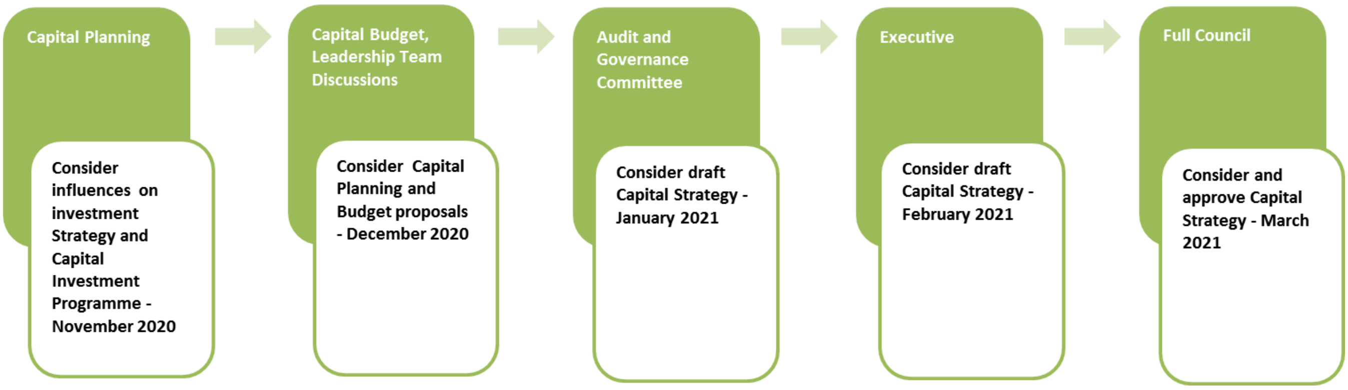
Action	Why is this required?	Responsibility	Timescale
Embed the **council's carbon assessment tool** within **standardised business case** documentation so as to ensure sustainability issues inform decision-making	To support officers in capturing and maintaining project information, from proposal to project close down, in order to help inform decision making and prioritise investment	Head of Housing & Health	12 months

Governance

Description of existing approval mechanisms

The existing process for development and approval of the Council's Capital Strategy is summarised in the diagram below.

Figure 9: Capital Strategy Approval process



The internal governance structure will need to be mindful of partners' and external governance mechanisms and will need to communicate and engage with these structures through delivery of the Council's overall capital ambition.

Roles and responsibilities

All Officers and elected Members have a role to play in informing and delivering the Capital Strategy. These roles and responsibilities are summarised below:

Role	Responsibility
Elected members	To approve the Capital Strategy and monitor delivery of the Strategy through various scrutiny forums

Role	Responsibility
Leadership / Management Team	To develop and propose the Capital Strategy for approval
Programme / Directorate Managers	To help inform the Capital Strategy, identifying constraints and opportunities and communicate these to both Senior Management and Project Teams
Project Managers	To manage delivery of individual projects aligned to the Capital Strategy and to develop and maintain project information which will inform decision making processes and the direction and delivery of the Capital Strategy
Project Team members	To contribute to the delivery of individual proposals which align with the Capital Strategy

Skills and training

The Council benefits from the skills and experience possessed by both Officers and elected Members which will support delivery of individual capital proposals and the Council's overall capital ambition. The Council is also keen to support Officers and elected Members to continue to develop their skills sets and is therefore mindful of the implications capital proposals may have on the Council's workforce and future training opportunities and requirements.

The Council already has a programme of staff training available and will look to support that staffs who wish to continue their professional development appropriate to their role and subject to appropriate budget availability. Relevant training for elected Members is also undertaken on a routine basis and refreshed as required.

Any skills or experience required which are not already possessed 'in-house' should be identified through individual capital proposals or business cases and will be procured externally as necessary, and in accordance with the Council's Corporate Procurement Strategy.

Capital Strategy engagement

The Capital Strategy is a corporate document which helps stakeholders understand the Council's capital investment objectives and decisions. The Council is therefore keen that the Capital Strategy is informed by knowledge and experience from across the authority.

There is still work to do in fully developing and implementing the Capital Strategy as a corporate strategic document. Therefore, the Senior Management Team will consider a consultation and engagement plan over the coming months which will look to raise awareness of the Strategy and gather stakeholder input for future iterations of the Capital Strategy.

Capital Strategy date for review

The Capital Strategy is intended to be a dynamic document, responsive to changes in policy, strategic influences and delivery.

The Capital Strategy will therefore be updated as required and at least once on an annual basis.

Governance action plan

Action	Why is this required?	Responsibility	Timescale
Update the Capital Strategy as required and **at least once annually**	To maintain a dynamic and responsive Strategy which evolves as the Council's priorities do	Leadership Team	As required
Consider an **engagement plan** for the Capital Strategy	To continue to develop and inform the Capital Strategy, and raise awareness of the Council's capital investment ambition	Leadership Team	12 months

Appendix 1: Capital Programme by Corporate Plan priority

	Sustainability at the heart of everything we do	Enabling our communities	Encouraging economic growth	Digital by design
Investment in operational assets	✓	✓	✓	
Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	✓	✓		
Hartham Leisure Centre	✓	✓		
Ward Freeman		✓		
Car Park Resurfacing		✓		
Northgate End, MSCP, Residential and Commercial		✓	✓	
Arts Centre – Old River Lane	✓	✓	✓	
Hertford Theatre	✓	✓	✓	✓
LED Lighting Upgrades	✓	✓		
ICT Rolling Programme				✓

Appendix 1

	Sustainability at the heart of everything we do	**E**nabling our communities	**E**ncouraging economic growth	**D**igital by design
Open Space Improvements		✓		
Improve, maintain & renew structures along rivers and watercourses		✓		
Land Management Asset Register & Associated Works		✓		
Fixtures, Fittings and Equip (Both Centres)		✓		
Grants	✓	✓		