

Title of report: Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Strategy 2016/17 to 2018/19

Report of: Darren Collins – Strategic Director, Corporate Resources

Purpose of the Report

1. Cabinet is asked to recommend that Council approve the attached Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Strategy for 2016/17 to 2018/19.

Background

2. To provide a framework for the Strategic Director, Corporate Resources to exercise his delegated powers, the Council agrees a three year Treasury Management Policy and Treasury Strategy which is reviewed at the start of each financial year.
3. The attached Treasury Policy and Treasury Strategy have been prepared taking into account the Local Government Act 2003, Communities and Local Government's (CLG) Guidance on Local Government Investments, CIPFA's Prudential Code for Capital and CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management.
4. The Audit and Standards Committee reviewed the Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Strategy on 7 March 2016 and raised no comments for submission to Council.

Proposals

5. Cabinet is asked to recommend that Council approve the Treasury Policy and Treasury Strategy attached at appendix 2 and appendix 3, to ensure that the Council fully complies with the requirements of good financial practice in Treasury Management.

Recommendation

6. Cabinet is asked to recommend the Council to approve the Treasury Policy Statement and the Treasury Strategy as attached at appendices 2 and 3 to the report.

For the following reason:

To ensure that the Council fully complies with the requirements of good financial practice in Treasury Management.

Policy Context

1. The proposals in this report are consistent with the Council's vision and medium term priorities as set out in Vision 2030 and the Council Plan and in particular they ensure that effective use is made of the Council's resources to ensure a sustainable financial position.

Background

2. Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003 specifies the powers of a local authority to borrow for any purpose relevant to its functions under any enactment or for the purposes of the prudent management of its financial affairs. Borrowing is linked to the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital which sets out a range of prudential and treasury indicators that must be calculated to ensure borrowing is affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Prudential Code refers to the need for a clear and integrated treasury strategy.
3. In addition, under Section 15 of the Local Government Act 2003, authorities are required to have regard to the CLG's guidance on Local Government Investments. This document stipulates the requirement for an annual investment strategy to be integrated into the Council's Treasury Strategy.
4. CIPFA has produced the Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2011 (the Code) which represents best practice. The Council fully complies with the Code and this contributes towards achieving good practice.
5. Under Part 4 of the Council's Constitution the Strategic Director, Corporate Resources will produce a Treasury Policy Statement annually, setting out the general policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management function.
6. The Council also provides a treasury management service to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria (PCC) via a Support Services Agreement and a treasury management service to the Gateshead Housing Company through a Service Level Agreement.

Treasury Policy

7. The Council regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on the risk implications for the Council.
8. The Council acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable comprehensive performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management.
9. CIPFA's Code requires the setting out of responsibilities and duties of councillors and officers to allow a framework for reporting and decision making on all aspects of treasury management. To achieve this CIPFA has recommended the adoption of 12 treasury management practices (TMPs).

10. These principles are intended to provide a working document that forms a detailed framework for treasury management activities. The policy fully encompasses CIPFA's Code of Practice. In addition the policy fully takes account of the requirements of the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities and the guidance issued by the CLG supporting Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003 in respect of local authority investments. The Treasury Policy is attached at appendix 2.

Treasury Strategy

11. The Treasury Strategy for 2016/17 to 2018/19 is attached at appendix 3. This covers the specific activities proposed for 2016/17 to 2018/19 in relation to both borrowing and investments and ensures a wide range of advice is taken to maintain and preserve all principal sums, whilst obtaining a reasonable rate of return, and that the most appropriate borrowing is undertaken. The primary objective of the investment strategy is to maintain the security of investments at all times.
12. The Council has produced the Treasury Strategy to comply with the requirements of the Code, the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities and Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003. The Council considers that compliance with the above ensures that best practice is followed.

Consultation

13. Consultation on the production of the Treasury Policy Statement, including the Treasury Strategy for 2016/17 to 2018/19, has taken place with the Council's treasury advisers (Capita Asset Services, Treasury Solutions). The outcome of the consultation process, along with guidance issued by CIPFA and the CLG, has informed the format and content of the policy and strategy statements.

Alternative Options

14. There are no alternative options, as the Treasury Policy and Strategy reports recommended for approval are required in order to comply with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

Implications of recommended options

15. **Resources:**

a) Financial Implications - The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that the financial implications are set out in this report. There are no additional financial implications associated with the report itself.

b) Human Resources Implications - There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

c) Property Implications – There are no property implications arising from this report.

16. **Risk Management Implications**

The Treasury Policy and Treasury Strategy which informs activity in this area was prepared with the primary aim of minimising risk to ensure that the Council's

principal sums are safeguarded. Maximising income is considered secondary to this main aim.

17. **Equality and Diversity Implications**

There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

18. **Crime and Disorder Implications**

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

19. **Sustainability Implications**

There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

20. **Human Rights Implications**

There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

21. **Area and Ward Implications**

There are no direct area and ward implications arising from this report.

22. **Background Information:**

The following documents have been used in preparation of the report:

- Local Government Act 2003
- CLG Guidance on Local Government Investments
- CIPFA's Prudential Code for Capital
- CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management
- Council's approved Treasury Management Practice Statements

Treasury Policy 2016/17 to 2018/19

1. Approved Activities of the Treasury Management Operation

- 1.1 CIPFA has produced the Code of Practice on Treasury Management in Public Services (the Code), which represents best practice. Treasury management activities are defined by CIPFA as:
- 1.2 “The management of the organisation’s investments and cash flows, its bankings, 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”.
- 1.3 Gateshead Council provides a treasury management service to the PCC via a Support Services Agreement. The necessary power for this exists within Section 113 of the Local Government Act. A separate bank account enables the PCC cash balances to be monitored daily. The risk associated with investments is carried by the PCC and interest on investments is based on actual interest earned.
- 1.4 The Council also provides a treasury management service to the Gateshead Housing Company through a Service Level Agreement. Borrowing to fund the capital programme of the Company is also carried out by the Council and is included in the overall borrowing figure.

2. Formulation of the Treasury Strategy

- 2.1 The formulation of a Treasury Strategy involves determining the appropriate borrowing and investment decisions with the prime objective of safeguarding the Council’s assets and secondary objectives of obtaining a reasonable rate of return on investments and minimising the costs of borrowing. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on the risk implications for the Council.
- 2.2 The Treasury Strategy encompasses the requirements of CIPFA’s Treasury Management Code of Practice, Prudential Code for Capital and the CLG Guidance on Local Government Investments.
- 2.3 The Treasury Strategy covers the following:
 - a) treasury limits in force which will limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council, including prudential and treasury indicators;
 - b) prospects for interest rates;
 - c) the borrowing strategy;
 - d) debt rescheduling;
 - e) policy on borrowing in advance of need;
 - f) the investment strategy; and
 - g) the policy on the use of external service providers.

The strategy for 2016/17 to 2018/19 is attached at Appendix 3.

3. Prudential and Treasury Indicators

- 3.1 Under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003 the Council may borrow money

- (a) for any purpose relevant to its functions under any enactment, or
- (b) for the purposes of the prudent management of its financial affairs.

3.2 Under the requirements of the Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code of Practice the following indicators have been adopted:

- Compliance with the Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the public services;
- Calculations of:
 - Authorised limit;
 - Operational boundary;
 - Actual external debt;
 - Upper limit on fixed interest rate exposures;
 - Upper limit on variable interest rate exposures;
 - Maturity structure of borrowing; and
 - Upper limits for principal sums invested for periods of over 364 days.

3.3 Given the link to the budget and capital programme, these indicators were approved by the Council on 25 February 2016 as part of the Budget and Council Tax Level 2016/17 report. For completeness, the approved indicators are attached at Appendix 4.

4. Annual Investment Strategy

4.1 Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003 relaxed the constraints under which local authorities can invest.

4.2 The CLG has issued guidance to supplement the investment regulations contained within the Local Government Act 2003. It is also referred to under Section 15 (1) of the 2003 Local Government Act which requires authorities to “have regard (a) to such guidance as the Secretary of State may issue and (b) to such other guidance as the Secretary of State may by regulations specify”. The guidance encourages authorities to invest prudently but without burdening them with the detailed prescriptive regulation of the previous regime.

4.3 Central to the guidance and the Code is the need to produce an annual investment strategy. This is included as Section 6 of the Treasury Strategy in Appendix 3.

4.4 The Annual Investment Strategy document will include:

- The Council’s risk appetite in respect of security, liquidity and return;
- The definition of ‘high’ and ‘non-high’ credit quality to determine what are specified investments and non-specified investments;
- Which specified and non-specified instruments the Council will use, dealing in more detail with non-specified investments given the greater potential risk;
- The categories of counterparties that may be used during the course of the year e.g. foreign banks, nationalised/part nationalised banks, building societies;
- The types of investments that may be used during the course of the year;
- The limit to the total amount that may be held in each investment type;
- The Council’s policy on the use of credit ratings, credit rating agencies and other credit risk analysis techniques to determine creditworthy counterparties for its approved lending list and how the Council will deal with changes in ratings, rating watches and rating outlooks;
- Limits for individual counterparties, groups and countries ; and
- Guidelines for making decisions on investments and borrowing.

5. Policy on Interest Rates Exposure

- 5.1 The Budget and Council Tax Level 2016/17, approved by Council on 25 February 2016, sets treasury limits for the maximum and minimum level of exposure to fixed and variable interest rates. The use of any financial instruments, such as derivatives, to mitigate interest rate risks will be considered on an individual basis and the Strategic Director, Corporate Resources will require approval from the Council prior to entering into any arrangement of this nature.

6. Policy on External Managers

- 6.1 Treasury management advisers (Capita Asset Services) have been appointed to assist in achieving the objectives set out in the Treasury Policy Statement. The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources has not appointed external investment fund managers to directly invest the Council's cash. This position is subject to an annual review.

7. Policy on Delegation, Review Requirements and Reporting Arrangements

- 7.1 It is the Council's responsibility under the Code to approve a treasury policy statement.
- 7.2 The Council delegates the review of the policy and monitoring of the performance of the treasury management function to Cabinet, the scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to the Audit and Standards Committee, and the execution and administration of treasury management decisions to the Strategic Director, Corporate Resources. Any proposals to approve, adopt or amend policy require the consent of the Council and are matters for the Council to determine.
- 7.3 Council will receive:
- a) a Treasury Policy Statement and three year Treasury Strategy report, including the annual Investment Strategy, for approval before the commencement of each financial year; and
 - b) an annual report on borrowing and investment activity by 30 September of each year.
- 7.4 The Audit and Standards Committee will receive:
- a) a Treasury Policy Statement and three year Treasury Strategy report for scrutiny; and
 - b) a mid-year report on borrowing and investment activity.

Treasury Strategy 2016/17 to 2018/19

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2011 (the Code) emphasises a number of key areas including the following:
- a) All authorities must formally adopt the Code.
 - b) The strategy report will affirm that the effective management and control of risk are prime objectives of the Council's treasury management activities.
 - c) The Council's appetite for risk, including the appetite for any use of financial instruments in the prudent management of those risks, must be clearly identified within the strategy report and will affirm that priority is given to security of capital and liquidity when investing funds and explain how that will be carried out.
 - d) Responsibility for risk management and control lies within the organisation and cannot be delegated to any outside organisation.
 - e) Credit ratings should only be used as a starting point when considering risk. Use should also be made of market data and information, the quality financial press, information on government support for banks and the credit ratings of that government support.
 - f) Councils need a sound diversification policy with high credit quality counterparties and should consider setting country, sector and group limits.
 - g) Borrowing in advance of need is only to be permissible when there is a clear business case for doing so and only for the current capital programme or to finance future debt maturities.
 - h) The main annual treasury management reports must be approved by full council.
 - i) There needs to be a mid-year review of treasury management strategy and performance. This is intended to highlight any areas of concern that have arisen since the original strategy was approved.
 - j) Each council must delegate the role of scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to a specific named body.
 - k) Treasury management performance and policy setting should be subjected to prior scrutiny.
 - l) Councillors should be provided with access to relevant training as those charged with governance are also personally responsible for ensuring they have the necessary skills and training.
 - m) Responsibility for these activities must be clearly defined within the organisation.
 - n) Officers involved in treasury management must be explicitly required to follow treasury management policies and procedures when making investment and borrowing decisions on behalf of the Council (this will form part of the Treasury Management Practices).
- 1.2 This Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Code.
- 1.3 The Council will adopt the following reporting arrangements in accordance with the requirements of the revised Code:

Area of Responsibility	Council/ Committee/ Officer	Frequency
Treasury Management Policy & Strategy / Annual Investment Strategy	Council with review delegated to Cabinet	Annually before the start of the year
Annual Report	Council with review delegated to Cabinet	Annually by 30 September after the end of the year
In year changes to agreed Treasury Management Policy & Strategy / Annual Investment Strategy / Prudential and Treasury Indicators	Cabinet	By exception
Scrutiny of treasury management performance via mid-year report	Audit and Standards Committee	Mid-Year
Scrutiny of treasury management Policy, Strategy and procedures	Audit and Standards Committee	Annually before the start of the year
Treasury Management Monitoring Reports	Strategic Director, Corporate Resources	Monthly/Weekly
Treasury Management Practices	Strategic Director, Corporate Resources	Monthly

1.4 The revised Treasury Management Code covers the following Prudential Indicators which were approved by Council on 25 February 2016:

- Authorised limit for external debt
- Operational boundary for external debt
- Actual external debt
- Upper limits on fixed and variable rate exposure
- Upper and lower limits to the maturity structure of borrowing
- Upper limits to the total principal sums invested longer than 364 days.

1.5 In addition to the above indicators, where there is a significant difference between the net and the gross borrowing position the risk and benefits associated with this strategy will be clearly stated in the annual strategy.

1.6 The strategy covers:

- a) Prospects for interest rates;
- b) Treasury limits in force which will limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council, including prudential and treasury indicators;
- c) The borrowing strategy;
- d) Sensitivity forecast;
- e) External and internal borrowing;
- f) Debt rescheduling;
- g) Policy on borrowing in advance of need;
- h) The investment strategy; and
- i) The policy on the use of external service providers.

2. Prospects for Interest Rates

- 2.1 The table shown below outlines the Council's view of anticipated movements in interest rates, based on guidance received from the Council's treasury management advisers Capita Asset Services as at 12 February 2016, and various brokers.

	March 2016	June 2016	Sept 2016	Dec 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019
Bank Rate	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.75%	1.25%	1.75%
5 yr PWLB*	1.70%	1.90%	2.00%	2.10%	2.20%	2.80%	3.10%
10 yr PWLB	2.30%	2.40%	2.50%	2.60%	2.70%	3.30%	3.60%
25 yr PWLB	3.20%	3.20%	3.30%	3.30%	3.50%	3.70%	3.80%
50 yr PWLB	3.00%	3.00%	3.10%	3.10%	3.30%	3.50%	3.70%

* Public Works Loan Board, a statutory body operating within the UK Debt Management Office, which is an executive agency of HM Treasury. The PWLB's function is to lend money to other prescribed public bodies.

Short Term Interest Rates

- 2.2 The Council's treasury management advisers forecast that UK growth is likely to strengthen marginally in 2016 and 2017. It is not expected that the base rate will increase from 0.50% until quarter 1 of 2017 at the earliest and subsequent rate rises are expected to be slow and gradual.

Long Term Interest Rates

- 2.3 Following advice from the Council's treasury management advisers, the Council's view on longer term fixed interest rates is that there will be little difference between 25 year and 50 year rates which are expected to remain below 3.50% throughout 2016/17. It is also expected that PWLB rates on loans less than ten years in duration will be lower than longer term loans.

3. Treasury Limits for 2016/17 to 2018/19 including Prudential Indicators

- 3.1 It is a statutory requirement of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for the Council to produce a balanced budget. In particular, Section 31(a), as amended by the Localism Act 2011, requires a local authority to calculate its budget requirement for each financial year to include the revenue costs that flow from capital financing decisions. This means that increases in capital expenditure must be limited to a level whereby increases in charges to revenue from increases in interest charges and increases in running costs from new capital projects are limited to a level, which is affordable within the projected income of the Council for the foreseeable future.
- 3.2 It is a statutory duty under Section 3 of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003, and supporting regulations, for the Council to determine and keep under review how much it can afford to borrow. The amount so determined is termed the Affordable Borrowing Limit. The Authorised Limit represents the legislative limit specified in the Act.
- 3.3 The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities is a professional code that sets out a framework for self-regulation of capital spending, in effect allowing councils to invest in capital projects without any limit as long as they are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

- 3.4 The Council must have regard to the Prudential Code when setting the Authorised Limit, which essentially requires the Council to ensure that total capital investment remains within sustainable limits and, in particular, that the impact upon its future council tax and housing rent levels is affordable.
- 3.5 To facilitate the decision making process and support capital investment decisions the Prudential Code and the Treasury Management Code requires the Council to agree and monitor a minimum number of prudential indicators which were approved by Council on 25 February 2016 as attached at Appendix 4.
- 3.6 The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources will ensure systems are in place to monitor the treasury limits and will report to Council instances where limits are breached, with the exception of short-term breaches of the Operational Boundary. The Operational Boundary is set so that if breached it acts as an early warning of the potential to exceed the higher Authorised Limit and as such temporary breaches due to debt restructuring and temporary borrowing are acceptable, providing they are not sustained.

4. Borrowing Strategy

- 4.1 The Local Government Act 2003 does not prescribe approved sources of finance, only that borrowing may not, without the consent of HM Treasury, be in other than Sterling.
- 4.2 The main options available for the borrowing strategy for 2016/17 are PWLB loans, market loans and the Municipal Bond Agency. The interest rate applicable to either PWLB or markets loans can be fixed or variable.
- 4.3 Variable rate short term borrowing is expected to be cheaper than long term fixed borrowing and therefore may considered throughout the financial year. Due to the expectation that interest rates will rise, the risk of the potential increase in interest rates will be balanced against any potential short term savings.
- 4.4 There are different types of market loans available, including variable and fixed interest rate loans and Lender Option/Borrower Option (LOBO) loans. A LOBO is a loan where the lender can exercise their right to increase the interest rate of the loan at each call date. The borrower can then choose to either accept the higher interest rate or repay the loan. These loans are usually offered at an interest rate lower than the corresponding PWLB loan rate but this option increases the risk that it may be necessary to replace a loan at a time when the interest rates are high.
- 4.5 To mitigate this risk a limit is placed on the total level of borrowing that can be taken as variable interest rate loans. To provide scope to utilise new market products should they become available as well as minimise the cost of borrowing and increase the diversification of the debt portfolio it is proposed that the limit on variable rate loans should be 40% of total borrowing in 2016/17.
- 4.6 The main strategy is therefore:
- When 25 year PWLB rates fall within the average forecast rate for 2016/17 of 3.20% borrowing should be considered, with preference given to terms of less than 35 years to enhance the diversity of the borrowing portfolio.
 - Consideration will be given to borrowing market loans which are at least 20 basis points below the PWLB target rate.

Sensitivity of the forecast

- 4.7 The Council, in conjunction with Capita Asset Services, will continually monitor both the prevailing interest rates and the market forecasts, adopting the following responses to any changes. The main sensitivities of the forecast are likely to be the two scenarios below:
- *if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a much sharper RISE in long and short term rates than that currently forecast, perhaps arising from an acceleration in the start date and in the rate of increase in central rates in the USA and UK, an increase in world economic activity or a sudden increase in inflation risks, then the portfolio position will be re-appraised with the likely action that fixed rate funding will be drawn whilst interest rates are still lower than they will be in the next few years.*
 - *if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp FALL in long and short term rates (e.g. due to a marked increase of risks around relapse into recession or of risks of deflation), then long term borrowings will be postponed, and potential rescheduling from fixed rate funding into short term borrowing will be considered*
- 4.8 Against this background, caution will be adopted in the management of the 2016/17 treasury operations. The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources will monitor the interest rate market and adopt a pragmatic approach to any changing circumstances having delegated powers to invest and manage the funds and monies of the Council.

External and Internal Borrowing

- 4.9 As at 12 February 2016 the Council has net debt of £511.296m; this includes total borrowing of £617.899m and investments of £106.603m.
- 4.10 Investment returns are likely to remain relatively low during 2016/17 and beyond and interest rates are expected to be below long term borrowing rates therefore value for money considerations indicate that best value can be obtained by delaying new external borrowing and by using internal cash balances to finance new capital expenditure in the short term (this is referred to as internal borrowing). Any short term savings gained from adopting this approach will be weighed against the potential for incurring additional long term costs by delaying unavoidable new external borrowing until later years when PWLB long term rates are forecast to be higher. This position will be monitored on an ongoing basis during 2016/17 in response to any changes to interest rates and forecasts.
- 4.11 The Council has examined the potential for undertaking early repayment of some external debt to the PWLB in order to reduce the difference between its gross and net debt positions. The significant difference between early redemption rates and interest rates payable on PWLB debt means that large premiums are likely to be incurred by such action. This situation will be monitored in case the differential is narrowed by the PWLB.

Borrowing in advance of need

- 4.12 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 considered carefully to ensure that it is in line with the projected

capital financing requirement and prudential indicators and that the Council can demonstrate value for money and ensure the security of the funds.

- 4.13 In determining whether borrowing will be undertaken in advance of need the Council will;
- ensure that there is a clear link between the capital programme and maturity profile of the existing debt portfolio which supports the need to take funding in advance of need;
 - ensure the ongoing revenue liabilities created, and the implications for the future plans and budgets have been considered;
 - evaluate the economic and market factors that might influence the manner and timing of any decision to borrow; and
 - consider the alternative forms of funding.

Municipal Bond Agency

- 4.14 It is likely that the Municipal Bond Agency, will be offering loans to local authorities in the near future. The agency has declared itself open for business after issuing its first operating framework to councils. Once approved the agency will develop plans for its first issue of bonds. It is also hoped that the borrowing rates will be lower than those offered by the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). The Council will consider this as an additional source of borrowing as and when appropriate.

5. Debt Rescheduling

- 5.1 Any rescheduling opportunities will be considered in line with procedures approved under the Council's Treasury Management Practice Statements and will include a full cost/benefit analysis of any proposed variations. Any positions taken via rescheduling will be in accordance with the strategy position outlined in Section 4 above and will also take into account the prudential and treasury limits.
- 5.2 The reasons for any proposed rescheduling will include:
- the generation of cash savings at minimum risk; and
 - in order to amend the maturity profile and/or the balance of volatility in the Council's borrowing portfolio.
- 5.3 The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources in line with delegated powers outlined in the approved Treasury Management Practice Statement, will approve all rescheduling.
- 5.4 As short term borrowing rates are expected to be cheaper than longer term rates, there may be opportunities to generate savings by switching from long term debt to short term debt. Opportunities identified will take into consideration the likely cost of refinancing these short term loans, once they mature, compared to the current rates of longer term debt in the existing debt portfolio.
- 5.5 Consideration will also be given to the potential for making savings by running down investment balances by repaying debt prematurely as short term rates on investments are likely to be lower than rates paid on currently held debt. However, this will need careful consideration in the light of premiums that may be incurred by such a course of action and other financial considerations.

All rescheduling will be reported to Council in the mid-year and annual reports.

6. Investment Strategy 2016/17 to 2018/19

Introduction

- 6.1 The Council has regard to the CLG's Guidance on Local Government Investments and CIPFA's Code of Practice. The Council must produce a strategy on an annual basis which covers the subsequent three year period.
- 6.2 This annual strategy states which investments the Council may use for the prudent management of its treasury balances during the financial year under the categories of **specified investments** and **non-specified investments**.
- 6.3 Specified investments are denominated in Sterling, are for periods of 364 days or less and do not involve the acquisition of share or loan capital in any corporate body. Such an investment will be with either:
- the UK Government or a local authority, parish or community council, precepting or levying body or
 - a body or investment scheme which has been awarded a high credit rating by a credit rating agency.
- 6.4 Non-specified investments are deemed more risky and guidance on local government investments requires more detailed procedures. Such procedures are required in order to regulate prudent use and establish maximum amounts which may be invested in each category.
- 6.5 Both specified and non-specified investment types currently utilised by the Council are detailed in Appendix 6, along with approved limits. In addition to these, numerous other investment options are available for use and these may be considered suitable for use in the future. Should this be the case then the option will be evaluated in line with the procedures contained within the approved Treasury Management Practice Statement.

Investment Objectives

- 6.6 All investments will be in Sterling.
- 6.7 The Council's primary investment objective is the security of the capital investment. The Council will also manage the investments to meet cash flow demands and to achieve a reasonable return commensurate with the proper levels of security and liquidity. The risk appetite of the Council is low in order to give priority to security of its investments.
- 6.8 The borrowing of monies purely to invest is unlawful and the Council will not engage in such activity.

Changes to the Credit Rating Methodology

- 6.9 Continuing regulatory changes in the banking sector are designed to see greater stability, lower risk and the removal of expectations of Government financial support should an institution fail. This withdrawal of implied sovereign support is anticipated to have an effect on ratings applied to institutions.

6.10

The main rating agencies (Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's) have, through much of the financial crisis, provided some institutions with a ratings "uplift" due to implied levels of sovereign support. Commencing in 2015, in response to the evolving regulatory regime, all three agencies have begun removing these "uplifts" with the timing of the process determined by regulatory progress at the national level. The process has been part of a wider reassessment of methodologies by each of the rating agencies. In addition to the removal of implied support, new methodologies are now taking into account additional factors, such as regulatory capital levels. In some cases, these factors have "netted" each other off, to leave underlying ratings either unchanged or little changed. A consequence of these new methodologies is that they have also lowered the importance of the (Fitch) Support and Viability ratings and have seen the (Moody's) Financial Strength rating withdrawn by the agency

- 6.11 In keeping with the agencies' new methodologies, the rating element of our own credit assessment process now focuses solely on the Short and Long Term ratings of an institution. While this is the same process that has always been used for Standard & Poor's, this has been a change in the use of Fitch and Moody's ratings. It is important to stress that the other key elements to our process, namely the assessment of Rating Watch and Outlook information as well as the Credit Default Swap (CDS) overlay have not been changed.
- 6.12 The evolving regulatory environment, in tandem with the rating agencies' new methodologies also means that sovereign ratings are now of lesser importance in the assessment process. While this authority understands the changes that have taken place, it will continue to specify a minimum sovereign rating of AA+. This is in relation to the fact that the underlying domestic and where appropriate, international, economic and wider political and social background, will still have an influence on the ratings of a financial institution.
- 6.13 It is important to stress that these rating agency changes do not reflect any changes in the underlying status or credit quality of the institution. They are merely reflective of a reassessment of rating agency methodologies in light of enacted and future expected changes to the regulatory environment in which financial institutions operate. While some banks have received lower credit ratings as a result of these changes, this does not mean that they are suddenly less credit worthy than they were formerly. Rather, in the majority of cases, this mainly reflects the fact that implied sovereign government support has effectively been withdrawn from banks. They are now expected to have sufficiently strong balance sheets to be able to withstand foreseeable adverse financial circumstances without government support. In fact, in many cases, the balance sheets of banks are now much more robust than they were before the 2008 financial crisis when they had higher ratings than now. However, this is not universally applicable, leaving some entities with modestly lower ratings than they had through much of the "support" phase of the financial crisis.

Creditworthiness Policy

- 6.14 The Council uses the creditworthiness service provided by Capita Asset Services to assess the creditworthiness of counterparties. The service provided by Capita Asset Services uses a sophisticated modelling approach with credit ratings from all three rating agencies - Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's, forming the core element. However, it does not rely solely on the current credit ratings of counterparties but

also uses the following information as overlays which are combined in a weighted scoring system:

- Credit watches and credit outlooks from credit rating agencies;
- Credit Default Swap spreads, financial agreements that compensate the buyer in the event of a default, which give an early warning of likely changes in credit ratings; and
- Sovereign ratings to select counterparties from only the most creditworthy countries.

6.15 The end product of this modelling system is a series of colour code bands which indicate the relative creditworthiness of counterparties. These colour codes are also used by the Council to determine the duration for investments and are therefore referred to as durational bands. The Council is satisfied that this service gives the required level of security for its investments. It is also a service which the Council would not be able to replicate using in-house resources.

6.16 Sole reliance will not be placed on the use of this external service. In addition the Council will also use market data and information, information on government support for banks and the credit ratings of the government support.

6.17 The Council has also determined the minimum long term and short term ratings it deems to be “high” for each category of investment. These “high” ratings allow investments of 364 days or less to be classified as **specified investments**. The Council’s approved limits for this “high” credit rating for deposit takers are as follows:

High Rated	Fitch	Moody’s	Standard & Poor’s
Short Term (ability to repay short term debt)	F1	P1	A1
Long Term (ability to repay long term debt)	AA-	Aa3	AA-

6.18 To ensure consistency in monitoring credit ratings throughout 2016/17 the Council will not use the approach suggested by CIPFA of using the lowest rating from all three rating agencies to determine creditworthy counterparties, as the credit rating agency issuing the lowest rating could change throughout the year as agencies review the ratings that they have applied to countries, financial institutions and financial products. The ratings of all three agencies will be considered, with Fitch being used as a basis for inclusion on the lending list. In addition to this the Capita Asset Services creditworthiness service will be used to determine the duration that deposits can be placed for. This service uses the ratings from all three agencies, but by using a scoring system, does not give undue consideration to just one agency’s ratings.

6.19 The selection of counterparties with a high level of creditworthiness will be achieved by selection of institutions down to a minimum durational band within Capita Asset Services weekly credit list of worldwide potential counterparties. The maximum maturity periods and amounts to be placed in different types of investment instruments are detailed in Appendix 6.

6.20 UK Government nationalised/part nationalised banks will have a maximum limit of 40% or £20m of total investment, all other counterparties will not exceed a maximum

limit equal to 20% of total investments or £15m. Unless there are major changes in the level of investment balances throughout the year this limit will be reviewed prior to the commencement of each financial year.

- 6.21 Where more than one counterparty from a group is included on the counterparty list the group in total will be controlled by the above limits with the maximum limit being that of the parent company. Within the group each counterparty/subsidiary will have individual limits based on their creditworthiness although the total placed with the subsidiaries will not exceed the limit of the parent company. Subsidiaries that do not satisfy the minimum credit criteria will not be included.
- 6.22 A number of counterparties are also approved by the Strategic Director, Corporate Resources for direct dealing. These counterparties are included on the approved list and dealing will be within agreed limits. Direct dealing with individual counterparties must be approved by the Strategic Director, Corporate Resources prior to investments being placed.

Nationalised/Part Nationalised Banks

- 6.23 A number of banks in the UK do not conform to the credit criteria usually used to identify banks that are of high credit worthiness. In particular, as they are no longer separate institutions in their own right it is impossible for an individual rating to be assigned to them. Due to Government ownership these institutions now have the highest short-term rating possible as they effectively take on the creditworthiness of the Government and deposits placed with them are effectively with the Government. Taking this into consideration they have the highest rating possible. As a result of this when deposits are being considered with these counterparties the limits will be in accordance with the Capita Asset Services creditworthiness list.
- 6.24 Where the bank has not been fully nationalised but receives support from the UK Government the individual rating of the bank will not be taken into consideration and the relevant banks will be included on the Council's lending list as prescribed by the Capita Asset Services creditworthiness list as detailed in 6.23.

Foreign Banks

- 6.25 Only banks domiciled in countries with a minimum sovereign rating of AA+ will be considered for inclusion on the approved list, they must also meet the high rated lending criteria and have operations based in London. Limits will be prescribed by the Capita Asset Services creditworthiness list and limited to 364 days or less. Each country will be limited to the maximum investment limit of £15m or 20% of the Council's total investments. A list of those countries with a minimum sovereign rating of AA+ are shown in Appendix 7.

Local Authorities

- 6.26 The Council invests with other Local Authorities on an ad hoc basis; each investment is considered on an individual basis and agreed by the Strategic Director, Corporate Resources, prior to funds being placed. Limits are detailed at Appendix 6.

Non-specified Investments

- 6.27 In addition to the above specified investments, the Council has also fully considered the increased risk of **non-specified investments** and has set appropriate limits for non-high rated deposit takers. These are as follows:

Non High Rated	Fitch	Moody's	Standard & Poor's
Short term	F1	P1	A1
Long term	A-	A3	A-

Limits for non-high rated counterparties and non-rated building societies are detailed at Appendix 6.

- 6.28 The credit ratings will be monitored as follows:
- All credit ratings are reviewed weekly. The Council has access to Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's credit ratings and is alerted to changes through its use of the Capita Asset Services creditworthiness service. Ongoing monitoring of ratings also takes place in response to ad-hoc e-mail alerts from Capita Asset Services.
 - If a counterparty's or deposit scheme's rating is downgraded with the result that it no longer meets the Council's minimum criteria, the further use of that counterparty/deposit scheme as a new deposit will be withdrawn immediately.
 - If a counterparty is upgraded so that it fulfils the Council's criteria, its inclusion will be considered for approval by the Strategic Director, Corporate Resources.
- 6.29 Sole reliance will not be placed on the use of this external service. In addition the Council will also use market data and information on government support for banks and the credit ratings of government support.

Investment balances / Liquidity of investments

- 6.30 The Council deposits funds beyond 364 days to a maximum of 3 years. This will continue where the counterparty is deemed to be a low credit risk to ensure a good rate of return is maintained in the current market conditions. Deposits beyond 364 days will only be considered when there is minimal risk involved. With deposits of this nature there is an increased risk in terms of liquidity and interest rate fluctuations. To mitigate these risks a limit of £15m (20% of total investments) has been set and a prudential indicator has been calculated (See Appendix 4). Such sums will only be placed with counterparties who have the highest available credit rating or other local authorities.
- 6.31 Deposits for periods longer than 364 days are classed as **non-specified investments** and this will increase the total limit of overall deposits in this classification to 75%.

Investments defined as capital expenditure

- 6.32 The acquisition of share capital or loan capital in any body corporate is defined as capital expenditure under Section 16(2) of the Local Government Act 2003. Such investments will have to be funded out of capital or revenue resources and will be classified as '**non-specified investments**'.

- 6.33 A loan or grant by the Council to another body for capital expenditure by that body is also deemed by regulation to be capital expenditure by the Council. It is therefore important for the Council to clearly identify if the loan was made for policy reasons (e.g. to a registered social landlord for the construction/improvement of dwellings) or if it is an investment for treasury management purposes. The latter will be governed by the framework set by the Council for 'specified' and 'non-specified' investments.

Internal Investment Strategy

- 6.34 The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources will monitor the interest rate market and react appropriately to any changing circumstances.
- 6.35 The Council takes the view that base rate will remain unchanged at 0.50% before starting to rise from quarter 1 of 2017 so short term deposits, up to 364 days, will be utilised to cover cash flow and minimise risk to the Council. Bank rate forecasts for financial year end are 2016/17 0.75%, 2017/18 1.25% and 2018/19 1.75%.
- 6.36 The overall balance of risks to these forecasts is currently to the downside (i.e. start of increases in Bank Rate occurs later). However, should the pace of growth quicken and/or forecasts for increase in inflation rise, there could be an upside risk.
- 6.37 The Council will avoid locking into longer term deals while investment rates are down at historically low levels. Long term deposits, beyond 364 days, will only be used where minimal risk is involved and the counterparties are considered to be supported by the UK Government.

Investment Risk Benchmark

- 6.38 The council will use an investment benchmark to assess the investment performance of its investment portfolio against the 7 day LIBID. The Council is also a member of the Capita Asset Services(CAS) investment benchmarking Group who meet semi-annually. As a member, quarterly reports on comparative performance with other members of the group and the wider CAS client base are received. The benchmark return for the group is reasonable target for the council, which allows the relative risk appetite to be considered as part of the benchmark.

End of year investment report

- 6.39 By the end of September each year the Council will receive a report from Cabinet on its investment activity as part of its annual treasury report.

Policy on use of external service providers

- 6.40 The Council currently uses Capita Asset Services as its external treasury management advisers.
- 6.41 The Council recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the organisation at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers.
- 6.42 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.

Scheme of Delegation

6.43 As required by the Guidance Notes for Local Authorities the Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation is detailed below.

Council

- Approve treasury management policy and strategy prior to the start of each financial year;
- Approve the annual investment strategy prior to the start of each financial year; and
- Agree the annual report.

Cabinet

- Receive and review treasury management policy and strategy prior to the start of each financial year;
- Receive and review the annual investment strategy prior to the start of each financial year;
- Approve and monitor prudential and treasury indicators.
- Receive and review the annual report; and
- Approve any proposed variations in treasury management policy and strategy, annual investment strategy or prudential and treasury indicators.

Audit and Standards Committee

- Scrutinise the treasury management policy, strategy and practices and make recommendations to Cabinet; and
- Agree mid-year monitoring report.

Role of the Section 151 Officer

6.44 As required by the Guidance Notes for Local Authorities the role of the Section 151 Officer in relation to treasury management is detailed below.

- Recommending the Code of Practice to be applied, 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; and
- Arranging for the appointment of external service providers.

7. Other Issues

Heritable Bank Deposits

- 7.1 When Heritable bank entered administration in October 2008 the Council had £2.8m invested which was due to mature with interest by the end of 2008/09.
- 7.2 To date dividends totalling £2.736m (98.00p in the £) have been received. This is an overachievement against the initial estimate of a return of 90p in the £. The most recent update from the administrators confirmed that they do not intend to make any further distributions of dividend until the resolution of the ongoing litigation of their claim with Landsbanki.

Prudential Indicators – Treasury Management

Authorised Limit For External Debt			
	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000
Borrowing	750,000	765,000	770,000

Operational Boundary For External Debt			
	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000
Borrowing	725,000	740,000	745,000

Treasury Indicators

Upper Limit on Fixed and Variable Interest Rates Exposures			
Range	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000
Fixed Rate:			
Upper	624,164	622,283	620,814
Lower	357,170	333,322	342,848
Variable Rate:			
Upper	152,227	192,476	186,854
Lower	(30,000)	(30,000)	(30,000)

Upper and Lower Limits for the Maturity Structure of Borrowings		
	Upper Limit	Lower Limit
Under 12 months	20%	0%
12 months and within 24 months	20%	0%
24 months and within 5 years	50%	0%
5 years and within 10 years	50%	0%
10 years and within 20 years	50%	0%
20 years and within 30 years	50%	0%
30 years and within 40 years	50%	0%
40 years and within 50 years	60%	0%
50 years and above	30%	0%

Upper Limit on Amounts Invested Beyond 364 Days			
	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000
Investments	15,000	15,000	15,000

Specified Investments (All Sterling Denominated)

Investment type	Share/ Loan Capital	Repayable/ Redeemable within 12 months	Security / Minimum Credit Rating	Capital Expenditure	Circumstance of use	Maximum period
Term deposits with the UK Government or with UK local authorities (i.e. local authorities as defined under Section 23 of the 2003 Act) with maturities up to 364 days.	No	Yes	High security although LA's not credit rated. <i>See section 6.3</i>	No	In-house	364 days
Term deposits with credit-rated deposit takers (banks and building societies), including callable deposits with maturities up to 364 days.	No	Yes	Secure Varied minimum credit rating <i>See section 6.3</i>	No	In-house	364 days
Money Market Funds (including 7 day notice account) These funds are instant access and therefore do not have a maturity date.	No	Yes	Secure Varied minimum credit rating <i>See section 6.3</i>	No	In-house	The investment period is subject to liquidity and cash flow requirements. It is assumed that funds are placed overnight and will be returned and reinvested the next working day (although no actual movement of cash may take place).

Non-Specified Investments (All Sterling Denominated)

Investment type	(A) Why use it (B) Associated risks	Share/ Loan Capital	Repayable/ Redeemable within 12 months	Security / Minimum credit rating	Capital Expenditure	Circumstance of use	Max % of overall investments	Maximum maturity of investment
Rated deposit takers (banks and building societies) which do not meet the Council's "high" credit rating	(A) To improve ability to place smaller amounts (B) Greater risk than "high" counterparties but advance warning by rating agency of potential problems. The Council has fully considered this investment category and set appropriate investment and maturity limits in order to minimise risk.	No	Yes	Secure Varied minimum Credit rating <i>Minimum: Long term A- Short term F1</i>	No	In-house	75%	6 months (but set on an individual counterparty basis)
Term deposits with UK Government, UK Local Authorities or credit rated banks and building societies, with maturities over 1 year	A) To improve the ability to "lock in" at times of high interest rates to secure a higher return over a longer period should rates be forecast to fall. B) Lower liquidity and greater risk of adverse interest rate fluctuations. The Council has fully considered this investment category and set appropriate investment and maturity limits in order to minimise risk.	No	No	Secure Varied minimum credit rating	No	In-house	20%	3 years

<p>Certificate of Deposits issued by banks and building Societies</p>	<p>A) Provides additional counterparties, as many banks do not want to take fixed term cash deposits. B) Credit risk could change but if adverse there is an option to sell onto a secondary market. The Council has fully considered this investment category and set appropriate investment and maturity limits in order to minimise risk.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Secure Varied minimum Credit rating <i>Minimum:</i> <i>Fitch</i> <i>Long term</i> A- <i>Short term</i> F1</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>In-House</p>	<p>20%</p>	<p>12 months (but set on an individual counterparty basis)</p>
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Appendix 6

Maximum Maturity Periods and Amounts

Organisation	Criteria	Max Amount*	Max Period
<p>High Rated (Specified Investments – High rated and up to 364 days see Appendix 5)</p>	<p>Minimum Fitch rating of F1 short term and AA- long term.</p> <p>Consideration to be given to Moody's minimum rating of P1 short term backed by Aa3 long term and S&P minimum rating of A1 short term and AA- long term.</p>	<p>£20m (Gov't Backed, otherwise £15m)</p>	<p>3 years</p>
<p>Foreign Banks</p>	<p>Must meet the minimum high rated criteria above and have a minimum sovereign rating of AA+</p>	<p>£15m country limit</p>	<p>364 Days</p>
<p>Non-High Rated</p>	<p>Minimum Fitch rating of F1 short term and A- long term.</p> <p>Consideration to be given to Moody's minimum rating of P1 short term backed by A3 long term and S&P minimum rating of A1 short term and A- long term.</p>	<p>£5m</p>	<p>6 months</p>
<p>UK Local Authorities</p>	<p>(i.e. local authorities as defined under Section 23 of the 2003 Act) Each investment is considered on an individual basis</p>	<p>£10m</p>	<p>3 years</p>
<p>Money Market Funds</p>	<p>AAA long-term rating backed up with lowest volatility rating (MR1+) with assets >£1bn</p>	<p>£7.5m</p>	<p>Overnight</p>

* Restricted to a maximum of either 40% or 20% of total investments depending on the counterparty.

Foreign Banks

Appendix 7

This list is based on those countries which have sovereign ratings of AA+ or higher at 05/02/2016.

AAA

- Australia
- Canada
- Denmark
- Finland
- Germany
- Netherlands
- Singapore
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- U.S.A

AA+

- U.K.