

Item: 5

Policy and Resources Committee: 28 November 2023.

Treasury Management – Mid-Year Update.

Report by Head of Finance.

1. Purpose of Report

To provide a mid-year update in respect of the Council's treasury management function for the period 1 April to 30 September 2023.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to scrutinise:

2.1.

The mid-year update, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, prepared by Link Treasury Services, the Council's Treasury Adviser, which covers the following elements of treasury management, in order to obtain assurance that the Treasury Management Practices are operated effectively:

- An economic update for the first half of the 2023/24 financial year.
- A review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy.
- The Council's capital expenditure, as set out in the Capital Strategy and prudential indicators.
- A review of the Council's investment portfolio for 2023/24.
- A review of the Council's borrowing strategy for 2023/24.
- A review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2023/24.

3. Background

3.1.

Regulation 21 of the Council's Financial Regulations confirms that the Council has adopted the key recommendations of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services (the Code).

3.2.

The Code defines treasury management to include investment activities.

3.3.

The Council's investment priorities can be summarised as maintaining:

- The security of capital.
- The liquidity of its investments.

3.4.

The Council aims to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity. The risk appetite of the Council is low in order to give priority to security of its investments. This is in keeping with the nature of the Strategic Reserve Fund, which is to provide for the benefit of Orkney and its inhabitants, whilst having regard to the Fund's long-term obligations in terms of the decline and decommissioning of the Flotta Oil Terminal in the future.

3.5.

The Financial Regulations refer to maintenance of the Treasury Management Policy Statement and Treasury Management Practices as the cornerstone for effective treasury management and the requirement to report annually on the Treasury Management function.

4. Treasury Management Performance

4.1.

A detailed analysis of the Treasury Management Performance for financial year 2023/24, as at 30 September 2023, is attached as Appendix 1 to this report, and covers the following activities:

- Borrowing activity.
- Temporary loans.
- Strategic Reserve Fund.

4.2.

The conclusion of the analysis of performance is that existing treasury management practices have operated effectively over the first six months of financial year 2023/24.

4.3.

Recurring slippage continues to be a feature within the approved capital programmes. The Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 reflected a reprofiling exercise which was reported to the Policy and Resources Committee on 21 February 2023, whereby £10,224,000 was reprofiled into financial year 2023/24 and beyond. Further slippage of £6,304,000 was recommended for approval on 19 September 2023, resulting in overall slippage for financial year 2022/23 of works valued at £16,528,000. Not only does this impact on the cost of delivering the capital

programme works, it also delays the timescale over which the capital finance is required.

4.4.

As part of its Treasury Management Strategy for 2022 to 2025, the Council has established an authorised limit for external debt of £85,000,000 for financial years 2023/24 to 2024/25, together with an operational boundary of £70,000,000 in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

4.5.

The Council supports its capital financing requirement through a combination of borrowings and use of internal reserves. In determining this combination, the cost of raising additional finance or borrowing is compared against the opportunity cost of using internal reserves and balances, in that these funds could otherwise be generating an investment return for the Council. On the basis the capital financing requirement can be externalised through borrowings, and investment returns generated in excess of the cost of any borrowings to meet the requirements of the capital programme, the potential exists for a net saving to be realised by the treasury management function over the longer term.

4.6.

As at 30 September 2023, the Council's debt portfolio stood at £40,043,000, with loan maturities ranging over periods from one to 46.5 years. Overall, this represents an average cost of borrowing of 2.75% per annum, with an average weighted duration of 31.06 years.

4.7.

The cost of this debt is managed as part of the loan charges associated with the capital programme and has been offset in the short term with surplus funds placed on deposit for periods of up to one year at an average rate of 4.68% for the first half of financial year 2023/24.

4.8.

Although there remains much uncertainty over interest rates, the forecast is for rates to fall back over the next two to three years, which will impact on future borrowing requirements.

4.9.

The prime objective for the managed funds remains to maintain or increase their real value over time, while at the same time generating an annual return which meets the targets set by the Council. These objectives normally require to be measured over a number of years while acknowledging that abnormal fluctuations in the short term do create a cause for concern.

4.10.

In February 2019, a review of the Strategic Reserve Fund managed fund investments concluded that an investment strategy with an income bias, i.e. a weighting in favour of income generation, better suited the Council's needs than a strategy focused towards capital growth.

4.11.

The process to onboard the fund managers to the new mandates commenced during financial year 2019/20, and although progress to implement the revised strategy has been at a slower pace than originally envisaged due to the volatility experienced in the markets relating to COVID-19, amongst other things, all transfers and drawdown of commitments is now complete.

5. Corporate Governance

This report relates to the Council complying with scrutiny and its financial processes and procedures and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

6. Financial Implications

The financial implications are contained within the body of the report.

7. Legal Aspects

7.1.

Treasury Management arrangements help the Council meet its statutory obligation to secure best value.

7.2.

Section 40 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 provides local authorities with the power to invest money. This power may be exercised in accordance with regulations made by Scottish Ministers under this section.

7.3.

Section 95 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 states that every local authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that the proper officer has responsibility for the administration of those affairs.

8. Contact Officers

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9. Appendix

Appendix 1: Treasury Management Update – Mid-year review 2023/24.

Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy

**Mid-Year Review Report
2023/24
Orkney Islands Council**

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1. Background

1.1 Capital Strategy

In December 2021, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, (CIPFA), issued revised Prudential and Treasury Management Codes. These require all local authorities to prepare a Capital Strategy which is to provide the following:

- a high-level 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.

1.2 Treasury management

The Council operates a balanced budget, which broadly means cash raised during the year will meet its cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operations ensure this cash flow is adequately planned, with surplus monies being invested in low risk counterparties, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering optimising 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 the Council can meet its capital spending operations. This management of longer term cash may involve arranging long or short term loans, or using longer term cash flow surpluses, and on occasion any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.

Accordingly, treasury management is defined 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.”

2. Introduction

This report has been written in accordance with the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (revised 2021).

The primary requirements of the Code are as follows:

1. Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management activities.
2. Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
3. Receipt by the full Council of an annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement - including the Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy - for the year ahead, a Mid-year Review Report and an Annual Report, (stewardship report), covering activities during the previous year. (Quarterly reports are also required for the periods ending April to June and October to December but may be assigned to a designated committee or panel as deemed appropriate to meet the Treasury Management governance and scrutiny aspects of the Council.)
4. Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring treasury management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions.
5. Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to a specific named body. For this Council the delegated body is the Policy and Resources Committee:

This mid-year report has been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management, and covers the following:

- An economic update for the first half of the 2023/24 financial year;
- A review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy;
- The Council's capital expenditure, as set out in the Capital Strategy, and prudential indicators;
- A review of the Council's investment portfolio for 2023/24;
- A review of the Council's borrowing strategy for 2023/24;
- A review of any debt rescheduling undertaken during 2023/24;
- A review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2023/24.

3. Economics and Interest Rates

3.1 Economics Update

- The first half of 2023/24 saw:
 - Interest rates rise by a further 100bps, taking Bank Rate from 4.25% to 5.25% and, possibly, the peak in the tightening cycle;
 - Short, medium and long-dated gilts remain elevated as inflation continually surprised to the upside;
 - A 0.5% m/m decline in real GDP in July, mainly due to more strikes;
 - CPI inflation falling from 8.7% in April to 6.7% in August, its lowest rate since February 2022, but still the highest in the G7;
 - Core CPI inflation declining to 6.2% in August from 7.1% in April and May, a then 31 years high;
 - A cooling in labour market conditions, but no evidence yet that it has led to an easing in wage growth (as the 3myy growth of average earnings rose to 7.8% in August, excluding bonuses).
- The 0.5% m/m fall in GDP in July suggests that underlying growth has lost momentum since earlier in the year. Some of the weakness in July was due to there being almost twice as many working days lost to strikes in July (281,000) than in June (160,000). But with output falling in 10 out of the 17 sectors, there is an air of underlying weakness.
- The fall in the composite Purchasing Managers Index from 48.6 in August to 46.8 in September left it at its lowest level since COVID-19 lockdowns reduced activity in January 2021. As face value, it is consistent with the 0.2% q/q rise in real GDP in the period April to June, being followed by a contraction of up to 1% in the second half of 2023.
- The 0.4% m/m rebound in retail sales volumes in August is not as good as it looks as it partly reflected a pickup in sales after the unusually wet weather in July. Sales volumes in August were 0.2% below their level in May, suggesting much of the resilience in retail activity in the first half of the year has faded.
- As the growing drag from higher interest rates intensifies over the next six months, we think the economy will continue to lost momentum and soon fall into a mild recession. Strong labour demand, fast wage growth and government handouts have all supported household incomes over the past year. And with CPI inflation past its peak and expected to decline further, the economy has got through the cost-of-living crisis without recession. But even though the worst of the falls in real household disposable incomes are behind us, the phasing out of financial support packages provided by the government during the energy crisis means real incomes are unlikely to grow strongly. Higher interest rates will soon bite harder too. We expect the Bank of England to keep interest rates at the probably peak of 5.25% until the second half of 2024. Mortgage rates are likely to stay above 5.0% for around a year.
- The tightness of the labour market continued to ease, with employment in the three months to July falling by 207,000. The further decline in the number of job vacancies from 1.017m in July to 0.989m in August suggests that the labour market has loosened a bit further since July. That is the first time it has fallen below 1m since July 2021. At 3.0% in July, and likely to have fallen to 2.9% in August, the job vacancy rate is getting closer to 2.5%, which would be consistent with slower wage growth. Meanwhile, the 48,000 decline in the supply of workers in the three months to July offset some of the loosening in the tightness of the labour market. That was due to a 63,000 increase in inactivity in the three months to July as more people left the labour market due to long term sickness or to enter education. The supply of labour is still 0.3% below its pre-pandemic February 2020 level.
- But the cooling in labour market conditions still has not fed through to an easing in wage growth. While the monthly rate of earnings growth eased sharply from an upwardly revised +2.2% in June to -0.9% in July, a lot of that was due to the one-off bonus payments for NHS staff in June not being repeated in July. The headline 3myy rate rose from 8.4% (revised up from 8.2%) to 8.5%, which meant UK wage growth remains much faster than in the US and in the Euro-zone. Moreover, while the Bank of England's closely watched measure of regular private sector wage growth eased a touch in July, from 8.2% 3myy in June to 8.1% 3myy, it is still well above the Bank of England's prediction for it to fall to 6.9% in September.
- CPI inflation declined from 6.8% in July to 6.7% in August, the lowest rate since February 2022. The biggest positive surplus was the drop in core CPI inflation, which declined from 6.9% to 6.2%. That reverses all the rise since March and means the gap between the UK and elsewhere has shrunk (US core inflation is 4.4% and in the Euro-zone it is 5.3%). Core goods inflation fell from 5.9% to 5.2% and the

further easing in core goods producer price inflation, from 2.2% in July to a 29-month low of 1.5% in August, suggests it will eventually fall close to zero. But the really positive development was the fall in services inflation from 7.4% to 6.8%. That also reverses most of the rise since March and take it below the forecast of 7.2% the Bank of England published in early August.

- In its latest monetary policy meeting on 20 September, the Bank of England left interest rates unchanged at 5.25%. The weak August CPI inflation release, the recent loosening in the labour market and the downbeat activity surveys appear to have convinced the Bank of England that it has already raised rates far enough. The minutes show the decision was “finely balanced”. Five MPC members (Bailey, Broadbent, Dhingra, Pill and Ramsden) voted for no change and the other four (Cunliffe, Greene, Haskel and Mann) voted for a 25bps hike.
- Like the US Fed, the Bank of England wants the markets to believe in the higher for longer narrative. The statement did not say that rates have peaked and once again said if there was evidence of more persistent inflation pressures “further tightening in policy would be required”. Governor Bailey stated, “we’ll be watching closely to see if further increases are needed”. The Bank also retained the hawkish guidance that rates will stay “sufficiently restrictive for sufficiently long”.
- This narrative makes sense as the Bank of England does not want the markets to decide that a peak in rates will be soon followed by rate cuts, which would loosen financial conditions and undermine its attempts to quash inflation. The language also gives the Bank of England the flexibility to respond to new developments. A rebound in services inflation, another surge in wage growth and/or a further leap in oil prices could conceivably force it to raise rates at the next meeting on 2nd November, or even pause in November and raise rates in December.
- The yield on 10-year Gilts fell from a peak of 4.74% on 17th August to 4.44% on 29th September, mainly on the back of investors revising down their interest rate expectations. But even after their recent pullback, the risk in Gilt yields has exceeded the rise in most other Developed Market government yields since the start of the year. Looking forward, once inflation falls back, Gilt yields are set to reduce further. A (mild) recession over the next couple of quarters will support this outlook if it helps to loosed the labour market (higher unemployment/lower wage increases).
- The pound weakened from its cycle high of \$1.30 in the middle of July to \$1.21 in late September. In the first half of the year, the pound bounced back strongly from the Truss debacle last autumn. That rebound was in large part driven by the substantial shift up in UK interest rate expectations. However, over the past couple of month, interest rate expectations have dropped sharply as inflation started to come down, growth faltered, and the Bank of England called an end to it hiking cycle.
- The FTSE 100 has gained more than 2% since the end of August, from around 7,440 on 31st August to 7,608 on 29th September. The rebound has been primarily driven by higher energy prices which boosted the valuations of energy companies. The FTSE 100’s relatively high concentration of energy companies helps to explain why UK equities outperformed both US and Euro-zone equities in September. Nonetheless, as recently as 21st April the FTSE 100 stood at 7,914.

3.2 Interest Rate Forecasts

The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisors and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

The latest forecast on 25th September sets out a view that short, medium and long-dated interest rates will be elevated for some little while, as the Bank of England seeks to squeeze inflation out of the economy.

Our PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps, calculated as gilts plus 80bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

Link Group Interest Rate View	25.09.23												
	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26
BANK RATE	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.00	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75
3 month ave earnings	5.30	5.30	5.30	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.00	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80
6 month ave earnings	5.60	5.50	5.40	5.10	4.60	4.10	3.60	3.10	2.90	2.90	2.90	2.90	2.90
12 month ave earnings	5.80	5.70	5.50	5.20	4.70	4.20	3.70	3.20	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
5 yr PWLB	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.40	4.20	4.00	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50
10 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.60	4.40	4.20	4.00	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50	3.50
25 yr PWLB	5.40	5.20	5.10	4.90	4.70	4.40	4.30	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80
50 yr PWLB	5.20	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.50	4.20	4.10	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.60

4. Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Update

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, (TMSS), for 2023/24 was approved by this Council on 21 February 2023.

- There are no policy changes to the TMSS; the details in this report update the position in the light of the updated economic position and budgetary changes already approved.

5. The Council's Capital Position (Prudential Indicators)

This part of the report is structured to update:

- The Council's capital expenditure plans;
- How these plans are being financed;
- The impact of the changes in the capital expenditure plans on the prudential indicators and the underlying need to borrow; and
- Compliance with the limits in place for borrowing activity.

5.1 Prudential Indicator for Capital Expenditure

This table shows the revised estimates for capital expenditure and the changes since the capital programme was agreed at the Budget.

Capital Service	Expenditure by	2023/24 Original Estimate £m	2023/24 Revised Estimate £m	Current Position £m
Social Care		6.312	8.784	2.649
Roads and Transportation		1.300	3.737	0.439
Education and Leisure		2.841	3.965	0.619
Marine Services		7.986	9.601	0.468
Other Services		10.191	11.918	0.795
Non-HRA		28.630	38.005	4.970
HRA		6.365	7.155	0.449
Total capital expenditure		34.995	45.160	5.419

The revised budget for 2023/24 reflects the following changes since the TMSS was approved in February 2023:

- Acceleration of £0.436M from financial year 2023/24 added to the 2022/23 capital programme.
- Slippage of £7.013M from financial year 2021/22 added to the 202/23 capital programme.
- Addition of £0.500M of COVID-19 Recovery Funding.
- Addition of £0.700M and £0.915M in respect of the Dounby Visitor Infrastructure Hub and Airfileds Buildings respectively.
- Reduction of £0.322M in respect of a Heating Upgrade which has been removed from the programme.
- Various other additions totalling £1.795M.

5.2 Changes to the Financing of the Capital Programme

The table below draws together the main strategy elements of the capital expenditure plans (above), highlighting the original supported and unsupported elements of the capital programme, and the expected financing arrangements of this capital expenditure. The borrowing element of the table increases the underlying indebtedness of the Council by way of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), although this will be reduced in part by revenue charges for the repayment of debt (the Minimum Revenue Provision). This direct borrowing need may also be supplemented by maturing debt and other treasury requirements.

Capital Expenditure	2023/24 Original Estimate £m	2023/24 Revised Estimate £m
Total capital expenditure	34.995	45.160
Financed by:		
Capital receipts	0.150	0.235
Capital grants	15.949	19.535
Capital reserves	0.00	2.152
Revenue	0.599	1.559
Total financing	16.740	23.481
Borrowing requirement	18.255	21.679

5.3 Changes to the Prudential Indicators for the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), External Debt and the Operational Boundary

The table below shows the CFR, which is the underlying external need to incur borrowing for a capital purpose. It also shows the expected debt position over the period, which is termed the Operational Boundary.

Prudential Indicator – Capital Financing Requirement

We are no longer on target to achieve the forecast Capital Financing Requirement with current estimates for slippage on the capital programme being £17.489M by 31 March 2024, against a revised budget for financial year 2023/24 of £45.160m.

Prudential Indicator – the Operational Boundary for external debt

	2023/24 Original Estimate £m	2023/24 Revised Estimate £m
Prudential Indicator – Capital Financing Requirement		
CFR – non housing	70.622	69.418
CFR – housing	11.541	10.908
Total CFR	82.163	80.326
Net movement in CFR	15.828	(1.837)
Prudential Indicator – the Operational Boundary for external debt		
Borrowing	70.000	70.000
Total debt (year end position)	35.085	35.043

5.4 Limits to Borrowing Activity

The first key control over the treasury activity is a prudential indicator to ensure that over the medium term, net borrowing (borrowings less investments) will only be for a capital purpose*. **Gross external borrowing** should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2023/24 and next two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years. The Council has approved a policy for borrowing in advance of need which will be adhered to if this proves prudent.

	2023/24 Original Estimate £m	2023/24 Revised Estimate £m
Borrowing	0	0
Total debt	35.085	35.043
CFR* (year end position)	82.163	80.326

A further prudential indicator controls the overall level of borrowing. This is **the Authorised Limit** which represents the limit beyond which borrowing is prohibited and needs to be set and revised by Members. It reflects the level of borrowing which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term. It is the expected maximum borrowing need with some headroom for unexpected movements. This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

Authorised limit for external debt	2023/24 Original Indicator	2023/24 Revised Indicator
Borrowing	85.000	85.000
Total	85.000	85.000

6. Borrowing

The Council's capital financing requirement (CFR) for 2023/24 is £80.326m. The CFR denotes the Council's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes. If the CFR is positive the Council may borrow from the PWLB or the market (external borrowing), or from internal balances on a temporary basis (internal borrowing). The balance of external and internal borrowing is generally driven by market conditions. Table 5.4 shows the Council has borrowings of £35.043m and has utilised £45.283m of cash flow funds in lieu of borrowing. This is a prudent and cost-effective approach in the current economic climate but will require ongoing monitoring if further upside risk to gilt yields prevails.

Due to the overall financial position and the underlying need to borrow for capital purposes (the CFR), £10.000M of new external borrowing was undertaken. The capital programme is being kept under regular review due to the effects of inflationary pressures, shortages of materials and labour. Our borrowing strategy will, therefore, also be regularly reviewed and then revised, if necessary, to achieve optimum value and risk exposure in the long-term.

It is anticipated that further borrowing will be undertaken during this financial year.

PWLB maturity certainty rates (gilts plus 80bps) year to date to 29th September 2023

Gilt yields and PWLB certainty rates were on a generally rising trend throughout the first half of 2023/24. At the beginning of April, the 5-year rate was the cheapest part of the curve and touched 4.14% whilst the 25-year rate was relatively expensive at 4.58%.

July saw short dated rates peak at their most expensive. The 1-year rate spiked to 6.36% and the 5-year rate to 5.93%. Although, in due course, short-dated rate expectations fell, the medium dates shifted higher through August and the 10-year rate pushed higher to 5.51% and the 25-year rate to 5.73%. The 50-year rate was 4.27% on 5th April but rose to 5.45% on 28th September.

We forecast rates to fall back over the next two to three years as inflation dampens. The CPI measure of inflation is expected to fall below 2% in the second half of 2024, and we forecast 50-year rates to stand at 3.90% by the end of September 2025.

However, there is considerable gilt issuance to be digested by the market over the next couple of years, as a minimum, so there is a high degree of uncertainty as to whether rates will fall that far.

PWLB RATES 01.04.23 - 30.09.23

HIGH/LOW/AVERAGE PWLB RATES FOR 01.04.23 – 30.09.23

	1 Year	5 Year	10 Year	25 Year	50 Year
Low	4.65%	4.14%	4.20%	4.58%	4.27%
Date	06/04/2023	06/04/2023	06/04/2023	06/04/2023	05/04/2023
High	6.36%	5.93%	5.51%	5.73%	5.45%
Date	06/07/2023	07/07/2023	22/08/2023	17/08/2023	28/09/2023
Average	5.62%	5.16%	5.01%	5.29%	5.00%
Spread	1.71%	1.79%	1.31%	1.15%	1.18%

- The current PWLB rates are set as margins over gilt yields as follows: -
 - PWLB Standard Rate** is gilt plus 100 basis points (G+100bps)
 - PWLB Certainty Rate (GF)** is gilt plus 80 basis points (G+80bps)
 - PWLB Local Infrastructure Rate** is gilt plus 60 basis points (G+60bps)
 - PWLB Certainty Rate (HRA)** is gilt plus 40bps (G+40bps)
- The **UK Infrastructure Bank** will lend to local authorities that meet its scheme criteria at a rate currently set at gilt plus 40bps (G+40bps).

7. Debt Rescheduling

Debt rescheduling opportunities have increased over the course of the past six months and will be considered if giving rise to long-term savings. However, no debt rescheduling has been undertaken to date in the current financial year.

8. Compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits

It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable capital expenditure limits. During the half year ended 30th September 2023, the Council has operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2023/24. The Director of Finance reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with these indicators.

All treasury management operations have also been conducted in full compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices.

9. Annual investment strategy

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2023/24, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy, was approved by the Council on 21 February 2023. In accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, it sets out the Council's investment priorities as being:

- Security of capital
- Liquidity
- Yield

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, but also to seek out value available in periods up to 12 months with high credit quality financial institutions, using the Link suggested creditworthiness approach, including a minimum sovereign credit rating and Credit Default Swap (CDS) overlay information.

Creditworthiness.

Following the Government's fiscal event on 23rd September 2022, both S&P and Fitch placed the UK sovereign debt rating on Negative Outlook, reflecting a downside bias to the current ratings in light of expectations of weaker finances and a challenging economic outlook. Nothing further has evolved in the first half of 2023/24.

Investment Counterparty criteria

The current investment counterparty criteria selection approved in the TMSS is meeting the requirement of the treasury management function.

CDS prices

It is noted that sentiment in the current economic climate can easily shift, so it remains important to undertake continual monitoring of all aspects of risk and return in the current circumstances.

Investment balances

The average level of funds available for investment purposes during the first half of the financial year was £11.729m. The temporary loans portfolio has operated within policy during financial year 2023/24 and has realised a return of 4.68% as at 30 September 2023. This is behind the 30-day Sterling Overnight Index Average rate performance benchmark (5.02%).

Treasury Portfolio investments held at 30 September 2023:

Treasury Investments – Managed in house	Principal (£m)	Interest Rate	Maturity Date
DMADF	1.000	5.30%	31/10/2023
DMADF	0.900	5.32%	15/11/2023
Bank of Scotland	3.200	5.14%	Call
Aberdeen Standard Investments Money Market Fund	4.400	5.23%	Call
Blackrock ICS Heritage Shared Money Market Fund	4.400	5.30%	Call
Insight Liquidity Funds PLC	4.400	5.29%	Call
The Royal Bank of Scotland	0.151	1.45%	Call
Total investments	18.451		

Non-Treasury Strategic Reserve Fund Local Investments – Managed in-house	Actual (£m)	Performance in 22/23
Fishing Quota	3.800	4.17%
Private Companies	4.058	5.0%
Other	0.013	0.0%
Total Strategic Reserve Fund Investments – Managed in-house	7.871	

Treasury Strategic Reserve Fund – Managed externally	Actual (£m)	Performance Quarter ending 30/09/23	Benchmark
Equity Portfolio	49.900	3.1%	0.6%
Global Equity Portfolio	45.222	-4.2%	1.2%
Diversified Growth Fund	27.064	-1.2%	1.3%
High Yield Credit Strategies Fund	21.790	2.0%	2.5%
Private Loan Fund	9.142	n/a	n/a
UK Property Fund	23.466	-0.8%	-0.4%
Secured Income Fund	31.152	n/a	n/a
Corporate Bonds Fund	39.195	2.1%	2.1%
Total investments	246.931	0.1%	1.0%

Approved limits

Officers can confirm that the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the period ended 30th September 2023.

No performance figures are provided where full drawdown of the Council's commitment has not been concluded.

10. Other

Changes in risk appetite

The 2021 CIPFA Codes and guidance notes place importance on risk management. Where an authority changes its risk appetite e.g., for moving surplus cash into or out of certain types of investment funds or other types of investment instruments, this change in risk appetite and policy should be brought to members' attention in treasury management update reports.

No changes have taken place during financial year 2023/24, however it should be noted that following a review of the investment strategy on 28 February 2019, the Investments Sub-committee resolved to further diversify into Illiquid Debt and Secured Income by way of direct investment to a pooled fund. It was further resolved that the equity allocation be split on a 50/50 basis between funds held on a growth basis, with a newly appointed Fund Manager, whilst retaining the existing Fund Manager on a simplified single global equity strategy with the existing value style bias, with the Corporate Bonds allocation to be transferred to a specialist passive manager. These diversifications were to be matched by a proportionate reduction in growth assets.

Although the process has moved at a slower rate than originally envisaged due to volatility experienced in the markets relating to COVID-19 and the more recent impact of the invasion of Ukraine, to date all transfers and drawdowns of commitments are now complete.

APPENDIX 1: Approved countries for investments as of 30th September 2023

Based on lowest available rating

AAA

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

AA+

- Canada
- Finland
- U.S.A.

AA

- Abu Dhabi (UAE)

AA-

- Belgium
- France (downgraded by Fitch on 9th May 2023)
- Qatar
- UK

APPENDIX 2: The CFR, Liability Benchmark and Borrowing

Comparison of borrowing parameters to actual external borrowing are shown in the graph below:

